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General Assembly

Fifty-sixth session

Official Records

50th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 13 November 2001, 9 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Han Seung-soo ..... (Republic of Korea)

The meeting was called to order at 9.05 a.m.

Address by Mr. Leo A. Falcam, President of the Federated States of Micronesia

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Federated States of Micronesia.

Mr. Leo A. Falcam, President of the Federated States of Micronesia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Leo A. Falcam, President of the Federated States of Micronesia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Falcam: I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you, Sir, on your election. My Government hails the selection of a leader with such esteemed qualifications, and we are confident you will lead the work of this body with the same high competence and spirit as did your distinguished predecessor, Mr. Harri Holkeri of Finland. We also share the pride felt by every Member of this body in the award of the Nobel Peace Prize to the United Nations Organization and to its highly admired Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan. We take great satisfaction in his re-election to another term, especially in this critical period.

Words cannot describe the horror of my people at the tragic event which unfolded here in New York, in Washington and other locations in September — and the one yesterday. On behalf of my people, please allow me to reiterate our deepest and most sincere condolences to the Government of the United States and to the victims and their families from all over the world. Our resolve to combat international terrorism is unwavering. My country will stand ready to assist in any way it can in order to help bring those responsible for these heinous acts to justice and to ease the suffering of those affected by their actions.

The recently completed special debate on terrorism by this body makes it clear that we are all brothers in this fight, with a shared determination to do what it takes to eradicate this blight on civilization. But, despite the great sadness in all our hearts over the recent and ongoing events, the regular work of this body cannot be derailed. Part of winning this battle is to demonstrate the commitment and capacity of this body to carry on with the great work of the Charter and on all sides.

Thus, in addition to other actions that are being taken to confront the current crisis, I call upon all Member States to ratify and bring into force as soon as possible the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism, which was adopted by a resolution of the General Assembly on 9 December 1999. I signed this important Convention yesterday on behalf of the Federated States of Micronesia, and I anticipate its prompt ratification by our Congress.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

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I take pleasure in saying that this year marks the tenth anniversary of the Federated States of Micronesia's membership in the United Nations. In those 10 years, my nation and the world at large have undergone unprecedented change. With the assistance of the United Nations system, the Micronesian people have worked tirelessly to forge our own identity at the international level.

Fifteen years ago, we entered into a relationship of Free Association with the United States of America. It is a relationship largely unprecedented in international relations. This arrangement was subject to great scrutiny by the United Nations, which ultimately approved the end of our status as a United Nations Trust Territory. It is testimony to the efforts of this body and the United Nations system that I stand before you today as the representative of a nation — an equal in the community of nations.

For hundreds of years, our culture was isolated from the rest of the world. In the past 10 years, our membership in the United Nations has opened up new horizons, new partnerships and a new understanding of peoples. We also note our appreciation for the special knowledge we have gained through our interactions with all of you here in this forum and elsewhere in the United Nations system.

In the past 10 years, the world, like Micronesia itself, has changed at a pace heretofore unknown. Although we may celebrate some victories in conflict prevention, clearly, other grave challenges remain, and new threats to international peace and security have emerged. We are encouraged at seeing the United Nations assert its leadership in combating these problems.

The past year has brought an ambitious slate of new United Nations initiatives to enhance the well-being of peoples throughout the world. There are far more noteworthy new initiatives than I have time to mention here. But please allow me to highlight a few of them.

While the effects of some grave threats to the Federated States of Micronesia will gradually manifest themselves over the coming decades, my nation is currently grappling with an ongoing and immediate concern: poverty. I am not speaking of the poverty of hunger and unchecked disease, but of the all-too-common developing world condition that has resulted from the persistent failure of all nations to achieve equal and equitable sharing of the world's bounties. Unfortunately, we are not alone, but this provides little solace. We applaud the United Nations as it continues its heroic work to reduce poverty and to bring a better standard of living to all peoples of the world. We will continue to work with our colleagues within the Group of 77 and China to further poverty reduction measures and to improve the standard of living of all humankind.

The historic isolation of the Federated States of Micronesia has sheltered us from the scourge of many communicable diseases, such as AIDS. Our integration with the world community has brought about change here as well. In this past year my country experienced its first domestic case of HIV infection. This is minor in comparison to the experience of those countries that have been devastated by the disease, but it is cause for concern, nonetheless, in a country of little more than 100,000 people. We wholeheartedly support United Nations initiatives in this regard, such as the recently concluded General Assembly special session on HIV/AIDS.

Traditional conflicts remain and, most troubling, many old animosities have spilled over into open hostilities. This serves to underscore the importance of United Nations initiatives, such as this year's World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, which recently concluded in Durban, South Africa.

After many years of overall peace and tranquillity, our region of the Pacific islands has recently seen a few long-standing conflicts erupt into violence of disturbing proportions. We applaud the efforts of the United Nations aimed at arriving at peaceful settlements, and the Federated States of Micronesia lends its full support to ongoing measures designed to keep the peace.

In the Pacific, one of the most effective means to that end has always been the Pacific Islands Forum. In the 30 years of its existence, the Pacific Islands Forum has played a pivotal role in maintaining the peace and security of our region. It has also contributed to notable progress on a broad slate of economic and social issues. I was pleased to participate in the recent meeting of the Forum and can express my country's full support for this year's communiqué, which has been issued as a document of this session of the General Assembly.

As a nation with one of the youngest populations in the world, the issues of children and youth are of utmost concern to us. We therefore commend the decision to hold the special session of the General Assembly on children. We understand fully the need to reschedule it and are gratified that the Assembly has decided to hold this session next May in order to give the issues of children and youth the prominence they deserve. On a related note, I am pleased to report that the Federated States of Micronesia has begun the process of evaluation with a view to signing and ratifying the two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Given the monumental pace of change, it is not surprising that in some respects the United Nations itself has been unable to keep pace with developments. We are appreciative of ongoing reform efforts, but we would encourage redoubled efforts on remaining matters that cry out for attention, such as the reconstitution of the Security Council.

While my nation grapples with the entire spectrum of transnational problems, such as drug trafficking and other aspects of international criminal activity, there is one threat that has our special attention. I am speaking, of course, about the accelerated rise in sea level caused by global climate change. We now know that the production of greenhouse gases by human activity plays a prominent role. It is this global issue that threatens my country's future as no other.

The Federated States of Micronesia contributes only in an infinitesimal way to the problem of human-induced climate change; yet we are among the "front-line" States that must deal with its impacts. We are comprised of a geologically diverse range of islands, from low-level coral atolls to mountainous volcanic outcrops. All share one common denominator — since the dawn of time, our people's livelihood has been tied to the sea. Even on our high islands, such as Pohnpei and Kosrae, the vast majority of the population on all islands lives in the coastal plain. On most islands, the possibility of moving to higher ground does not exist.

The distinguished scientists of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) have confirmed that the climate is changing and that human activities are playing a significant part in the warming of our planet. Credible scientific evidence suggests that the magnitude of the impact of that warming may be greater than even the most extreme estimates just 10 years ago. Indeed, it may already be too late to save my country and many others like it worldwide.

Already, our region has seen the beginnings of the movement of its peoples as a result of the rise in sea level caused by global warming. This year, Tuvalu, one of our similarly situated neighbours in the region, announced that it had begun examining relocation options. Unfortunately, its initial results were not encouraging, as there is no uniform willingness among more fortunate countries to provide a haven for these first "climate change refugees". Undoubtedly, it will be the outlying atolls of the Federated States of Micronesia, home to about half of our population, that are among the next to join the people of Tuvalu if current trends continue.

These developments point with new urgency to the need for constructive discussion of adaptation strategies and funding for small island developing States. We are encouraged by the new attention paid to these issues at the recent conference in Bonn, and we welcome the constructive outcomes of the conference just completed in Marrakesh with regard to such important issues as the enforcement of compliance.

We and all other parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change, signed nine years ago, were motivated by the "precautionary principle", whereby the lack of airtight scientific certainty could not be the basis for inaction. Today, virtually no uncertainty remains as to the reality of the main problem. Yet we are dismayed to see that in the media and elsewhere a handful of "greenhouse gas sceptics" are often still given a podium equal to that given to the distinguished scientists of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

In the past 10 years we have seen some progress in the form of the Framework Convention and the Kyoto Protocol, thanks to the tireless efforts of many delegations and good will on the part of Governments. However, a change in the position of several key signatories to the Protocol, which are also among the world's largest generators of greenhouse gases, undermines the success of the recent Bonn and Marrakesh talks, and has created a great deal of concern on the part of all low-lying island States. We warmly applaud those countries that have stood by their commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

We call upon those that have not to find the political will to take the actions that are, after all, in their own long-term best interests.

I do not mean to ignore the initial economic hardships these changes might entail; we understand them all too well. In the last five years, the Federated States of Micronesia has taken unprecedented measures to reduce the size of its public sector, far and away the largest employer in my country. These moves were vastly unpopular politically. Still, they were necessary and have put us on the right footing for a sustainable economic future. Similarly, longer-term economic benefits and competitive advantage can be gained by those nations that adopt a progressive climate change strategy.

We Micronesians are a proud people. Throughout the centuries, we have endured seemingly insurmountable difficulties. The threat from climate change is only the latest of these. Like some others we have faced, it is not of our own making, and it is not something that we can overcome by ourselves. The Kyoto Protocol, as it has been hammered out in Marrakesh, provides a necessary mechanism with which most nations can begin to attack global warming. I congratulate the negotiators on their significant, even historic, accomplishment. The emission cuts agreed to, however, amount to only a small first step.

In conclusion, I want to reiterate the sincere condolences of the people of the Federated States of Micronesia to those in all regions of the world who are suffering today from violence, poverty, terrorism and the violation of human rights. We pray for a peaceful end to the current conflicts raging throughout many regions.

We are reassured that the spirit and principles of the United Nations will guide leaders as they strive to prevent future outbreaks of violence while seeking to relieve current suffering. My delegation is proud of its contributions during our first 10 years of membership and pledges to do its utmost to continue to advance the goals of the United Nations for the betterment of all people throughout the world.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Federated States of Micronesia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Leo A. Falcam, President of the Federated States of Micronesia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Arnoldo Alemán Lacayo, President of the Republic of Nicaragua

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Nicaragua.

Mr. Arnoldo Alemán Lacayo, President of the Republic of Nicaragua, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Arnoldo Alemán Lacayo, President of the Republic of Nicaragua, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Lacayo (*spoke in Spanish*): Before I proceed, allow me, on behalf of the people and the Government of Nicaragua, to express our sorrow to the people and the Government of the Dominican Republic for yesterday's event. Allow me also, Mr. President, to join those who have come before me in congratulating you on your well-deserved election as President of the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly, and to express my confidence that under your competent direction this session will conclude its work successfully. I also wish to express our most profound appreciation for the praiseworthy work achieved by the outgoing President, Mr. Harri Holkeri of Finland.

Likewise, I wish to pay tribute to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, not only for having been re-elected to a second mandate with the consensus of the entire international community, but also for the recent, well-deserved, high distinction of being awarded, together with the United Nations, the Nobel Peace Prize.

The people and the Government of Nicaragua received with great concern the news of the criminal terrorist attacks against the people and the Government of the United States on 11 September. Since then, we have offered our solidarity and cooperation to the people and the Government of the United States for the capture and punishment of all those involved in those abhorrent acts. The magnitude of those terrorist acts brings new and diverse challenges in the political, economic and security areas. The enemies of peace and democracy have attempted to create a widespread

climate of uncertainty and fear. For this reason, our first challenge is not to allow ourselves to be intimidated or paralysed by their criminal threats and actions.

At the Central American level, on 19 September in Honduras, the Presidents of the isthmus adopted a Declaration entitled "Central America united against terrorism", in which we strongly condemned any ties between groups or sectors in the Central American region and international terrorism. As of that date, we began to undertake concrete initiatives aimed at improving information systems between neighbouring countries; increasing coordination between air and naval forces to deal with illicit traffic; ensuring better border monitoring; enabling the exchange of information between specialized public security agencies; increasing control over travel documents; and strengthening security for airports and civil aviation.

Nicaragua is a party to those measures and provisions that promote and safeguard international and regional peace and security through the prevention and peaceful resolution of disputes between States and the non-proliferation of nuclear and conventional weapons of mass destruction, which contravene the principles of international humanitarian law.

Our firm commitment to world peace and security led my country to host the Third Meeting of the States Parties to the Ottawa Convention, despite the fact that that meeting took place soon after the events of 11 September. The Managua Conference allowed the States parties to renew their commitment and to note with satisfaction the important progress that has been made in the crusade to eliminate anti-personnel landmines. The ratification of the Convention by more than 120 States; the strengthening of the mechanisms for its implementation; the progress in mine removal; the destruction of mines stockpiled in different parts of the world; and the virtual embargo on the international trade in these weapons are concrete steps in our effort to end the suffering brought about by antipersonnel mines.

I would like to earnestly appeal to the States that have not yet done so to ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, as well as the Convention for the Prohibition of Anti-Personnel Mines. Nicaragua also welcomes with satisfaction the Programme of Action to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects, adopted on 21 July.

Just one year ago, we convened the Millennium Summit, at which we made commitments designed to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century and reaffirmed our faith in the United Nations as the central instrument for promoting peace, security, prosperity and justice.

In order to respond effectively to the challenges that the new millennium imposes on us — challenges that cannot be ignored — it is crucial that we take resolute steps to reform the United Nations, ensuring that its policies and structures are commensurate with the realities and aspirations of contemporary international society. Nicaragua shares the interest of all Member States in strengthening our Organization so as to optimize its work in the maintenance of international peace and security, conflict prevention, the promotion of sustainable development and the battle against poverty.

In this context, it is crucial to move forward with reform of the Security Council so that that body can respond fully and effectively to current needs and to future challenges to our peoples.

Furthermore, the profound changes experienced by societies throughout the world since 1945 require the United Nations urgently to reaffirm its universal vocation as a fundamental prerequisite for confronting new challenges through the full and effective participation of all peoples, without distinction and excluding no one.

However, this universal vocation cannot be fully realized as long as a democratic State and signatory of the San Francisco Charter is unable to participate as a full-fledged Member within the United Nations system. As is well known, the Republic of China is a democratic country, and its freely and transparently elected Government is the only one that can legitimately represent the interests and desires of the people of Taiwan at the United Nations. We should not continue to deny the 23 million people who live in the Republic of China the right to be represented in the United Nations and to share with us the efforts to promote peace and development for future generations.

Let us recall that the Republic of China has played a positive role in the promotion of world trade, the eradication of poverty and the advancement of

human rights. These laudable efforts at the national and international levels must be recognized by the United Nations; the Republic of China should be given the right to integrate itself into the international order of the United Nations, having fulfilled the basic conditions in accordance with international law.

Since the beginning of my mandate in 1997, we Nicaraguans have taken significant steps in the important task of consolidating democracy and guiding our country along the path of development. The Nicaraguan people have made great sacrifices in laying the foundations of sustainable human development by strengthening the rule of law; stabilizing the economy through the implementation of responsible financial and fiscal policies; providing for the effective participation of civil society in national decision-making; and formulating a long-term strategy in the battle against poverty and for reducing economic, social and environmental vulnerability. That process, however, has not been easy, because of the heavy burden of our external national debt, international financial crises, the fall in the price of our main export products and natural disasters.

The elections held in my country on 4 November will go down in national history as an example of transparency, public spirit and profound democratic conviction. The orderly and transparent way in which the process unfolded, broad citizen participation, with fewer than 10 per cent of the population failing to take part, and the attitude of the people of Nicaragua reflect of the degree to which my country has progressed in strengthening its democratic institutions.

We strongly support the convening of the World Summit on Sustainable Development to take place in Johannesburg, South Africa, in September 2002, the task of which will be to determine the current status of the implementation of the commitments undertaken at the Earth Summit. As a reflection of that will, we note our ratification of the Conventions on Climate Change and Biological Diversity, the efforts carried out by the National Council for Sustainable Development and Nicaragua's participation in major projects for the preservation of the rich ecosystems of the region, such as the Meso-American Biological Corridor and the Atlantic Biological Corridor.

The new problems and challenges that humanity faces greatly exceed our individual capabilities as States. For that reason, it is imperative that we renew our commitment to the goals and principles of the United Nations, which will allow us to continue to advance in the building of a world that is more just, peaceful and secure for future generations.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Nicaragua for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Arnoldo Alemán Lacayo, President of the Republic of Nicaragua, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by Mr. Nambar Enkhbayar, Prime Minister of Mongolia

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of Mongolia.

Mr. Nambar Enkhbayar, Prime Minister of Mongolia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Nambar Enkhbayar, Prime Minister of Mongolia, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Enkhbayar (Mongolia): At the outset, I wish to pay tribute to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, upon his unanimous re-election. The Nobel Peace Prize conferred upon the United Nations and its Secretary-General testifies to the broad recognition of the increasing role played by the world Organization in promoting peace, security and development and vests in it, at the same time, greater responsibility and trust in meeting both the existing and evolving global challenges.

This session of the General Assembly is taking place at a time when the international community is drawn together more closely in the face of the unprecedented task of developing an effective response to the challenge of terrorism. The people and Government of Mongolia have resolutely condemned the barbaric attacks of 11 September as a deliberate act of terrorism against freedom and democracy — an attack against all humanity and expressed its full support for the collective efforts of the anti-terrorist coalition. From this high rostrum, I wish to reaffirm Mongolia's strong commitment to our common

struggle against the scourge of terrorism. I wish, on behalf of the Government of Mongolia, to reiterate our profound sympathy to the people and Government of the United States of America and to all the families that have been affected by this tragic event. I also express my condolences to New Yorkers and to the Governments of the United States of America and the Dominican Republic over the tragic accident that took place yesterday here in New York.

The response of the international community to the terrorist attacks has clearly demonstrated its firm resolve to collectively fight this global scourge. In this respect, Security Council resolution 1373 (2001) of 28 September is a timely measure, unprecedented both in its scope and nature. It has laid the groundwork for practical measures to be taken by all Member States in the fight against terrorism and established an effective mechanism to monitor its implementation. My Government is taking every necessary measure to implement the provisions of the resolution and the relevant report to that effect was submitted to the counter-terrorism Committee of the Security Council on 10 November.

I wish also to inform the Assembly that Mongolia signed yesterday the 1999 International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism. With its ratification in the near future, Mongolia will be party to all the United Nations anti-terrorism conventions applicable to it. We also believe that, in light of recent events, the existing international legal framework on terrorism ought to be further strengthened through the speedy conclusion of a comprehensive convention against international terrorism and a convention against nuclear terrorism, preferably at this session of the General Assembly. In the same vein, the pace of setting up the International Criminal Court must be accelerated.

In order to put the anti-terrorist strategy in the right perspective, it would seem important to us to see the problem in a wider setting, that is, to address issues that provide a fertile soil for terrorism, such as transnational organized crime, illicit drugs, money laundering, illegal arms trafficking and others. The United Nations, in our view, is uniquely positioned to meet such a challenge and to develop a comprehensive strategy to uproot international terrorism through global and concerted action.

The events of 11 September have drastically changed the world as we see it. It has revealed the heightened vulnerability of the human family. It has also revealed, in no uncertain terms, the need for change in our approach to the way we perceive our own security. In this regard, the concept of human security, which places the safety, security and well-being of a human being at the heart of the matter, deserves our utmost attention. We see the prime merit of the human security concept to be that it addresses in a comprehensive manner the three-tiered freedom outlined in the Millennium Declaration: freedom from want, freedom from fear and freedom to live in a healthier and cleaner environment.

In the emerging era of globalization, it is becoming increasingly evident that no country can ensure its security on its own. This indivisibility of global human security requires a genuine display of solidarity and collective responsibility on the part of every country of the international community so that it can effectively address the formidable challenges at the turn of the new millennium.

After several decades of development efforts, the number of the world's poor remains at an embarrassingly high level. Exclusion, marginalization and inequality among and within countries are being further exacerbated by both existing and evolving transboundary threats.

Looking back, one could describe the decade of the 1990s as a decade of commitments for development, with a series of international conferences and summits resulting in important declarations and plans of action. Yet today, the world finds itself in many respects in no better shape. The legitimate question arises: Why? Does the international community, increasingly seen as a single human family living in a shared global village, have the capacity to redress this situation? Technically, the right answer seems to be yes. There are resources — financial, human and technological — to ensure a better life. On the other hand, one has to admit also that the underlying reasons could be manifold, as the changes undergone and challenges faced by the world over the last decade are indeed complex both in nature and in scope.

Yet, we cannot but agree with the Secretary-General that

> "The widening gap between goals and achievements implies that the international community has failed to deliver on crucial commitments it made during the 1990s". (*A/56/326, para. 81*)

The real, hard question is then: Do we have the sufficient political will and sense of solidarity to forge the genuine partnership needed to erase the staggering discrepancy between commitments and action? In the final analysis, the answer to this question has to be affirmative and has to be supported by practical, meaningful action. We cannot afford to fail to honour for yet another decade our commitments if we are serious about ensuring human security. We cannot afford to fail to implement the far-reaching yet achievable targets set by the Millennium Summit last year. Our failure could be used as a justification for deadly acts by those who pose a threat to humanity. Let us therefore make the first decade of this new century one of implementation and cooperation for a safer, healthier and better world. Additional efforts are urgently required, and affluent countries could exhibit their solidarity and shared responsibility by further opening their markets, providing broader and faster debt relief and giving more and better-focused development assistance and incentives for foreign direct investment flows to their less fortunate partners.

We must mobilize the political will necessary to make the upcoming conferences on financing for development, sustainable development and food security a success. The lead-up to these important events and the conferences themselves are to take into consideration the special needs of small, vulnerable and structurally disadvantaged economies so as to enable them to integrate into the multilateral trading system and take advantage of the opportunities offered by the advance of globalization. We also believe that the international ministerial meeting on transit transport cooperation, to be held in 2003, is of crucial importance in enhancing international cooperation to ease the inherent development handicaps of the landlocked developing countries, as recognized in the Millennium Declaration.

My delegation shares the view that a commitment to human security demands enhanced international cooperation in conflict prevention and strengthened capacities to assist countries in restoring, building and keeping the peace. In this respect, Mongolia fully supports the Secretary-General in his efforts to move the United Nations from a culture of reaction to a culture of prevention. We believe that mutual understanding and dialogue among different peoples and civilizations are acutely needed to break the pattern of mistrust, suspicion and recrimination that either lead to a conflict or serve as a pretext for it. We know that mutual understanding and dialogue are possible when there is cooperation between nations.

This session of the General Assembly is of special significance to my country and its people, as we celebrate the fortieth anniversary of Mongolia's admission to the United Nations. On 27 October 1961 Mongolia became a full-fledged member of the world Organization, an event of historic importance to my people. Over the years our cooperation with the organizations of the United Nations family has been expanding both in scope and in substance. Today Mongolia is party to some 140 international treaties and conventions, and is a member of 33 inter-governmental and 20 regional and other organizations. The United Nations assistance and cooperation has been instrumental in developing human resources, capacity-building, education, health and information technology, reducing poverty, protecting the environment and developing an adequate response to natural disasters.

Within the framework of the fortieth anniversary, we have been undertaking a host of activities to take stock of our past cooperation with the organizations of the United Nations system and identify priority areas for future cooperation. This culminated in the joint conference organized by the Government of Mongolia and the United Nations on 3 September, in Ulaanbaatar, under the theme "Forty Years of Mongolia-United Nations Cooperation: Implementation of the Millennium Declaration". The main thrust of the discussions and conclusions of that conference has been incorporated into the memorandum of the Government of Mongolia on the implementation of the Millennium Declaration, which has been circulated as an official document of this session of the General Assembly.

Over the last four decades of our cooperation, Mongolia has been endeavouring to contribute, where it could, to the common efforts of the international community to promote peace, cooperation and development. My delegation is proud to recall that on the initiative of Mongolia the General Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Right of Peoples to

Peace, the principles and guidelines for international negotiations, resolutions to observe annually a Disarmament Week and relevant resolutions on the importance of human resources, cooperatives, rural women and the special needs of the landlocked developing countries. Furthermore, as a strong advocate of nuclear-weapon-free zones in various parts of the world, in 1992 Mongolia declared its own territory a nuclear-weapon-free zone, and has been working to further institutionalize this.

Recognizing the crucial role of education in ensuring sustainable human development and human security, my delegation is pleased to note that this session of the General Assembly is about to proclaim, on Mongolia's initiative, the 10-year period beginning 1 January 2003 the United Nations decade for literacy.

Mongolia supports peacekeeping operations as one of the important means of maintaining international peace and security. Since the mid-1990s, Mongolia has taken deliberate steps and made measurable progress in developing its peacekeeping capability. Showing its willingness to contribute to the United Nations peacekeeping missions through direct participation, in 1999 Mongolia signed a memorandum of understanding with the United Nations on standby arrangements regarding the provision of staff officers, military observers and medical officers. Mongolia stands ready to actively cooperate with the United Nations and to make a practical contribution to its peacekeeping operations.

As a member of the Conference on Disarmament, Mongolia cannot but fully agree with the Secretary-General, in paragraph 77 of his report on the work of the Organization (A/56/1), that the "level of international cooperation in disarmament remains disappointingly low." In order to bring the Conference on Disarmament out of its ongoing stalemate it may seem advisable to give political impetus to the disarmament agenda by convening a Security Council meeting at the highest level or holding one of the future sessions of the Conference on Disarmament at the level of Foreign Ministers.

In recent years Mongolia has been an active participant in international activities aimed at strengthening institutions and processes of democratic governance, protecting human rights and promoting democratic consolidation. The 1992 Constitution of Mongolia guarantees the Mongolian people fundamental freedoms and human rights. Mongolia is party to all major international human rights instruments. Earlier this year Mongolia set up an independent National Human Rights Commission. Yesterday Mongolia signed the two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Willing to share its fresh experience of peaceful and simultaneous transition to democracy and a market-oriented economy over the last decade and to learn more from the valuable experiences of other countries, Mongolia has offered to host the Fifth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies in 2003 in Ulaanbaatar.

The task of ensuring human security and promoting human-centred development is high on the agenda of my Government, as envisaged in its programme of action. Recognizing the importance of the quality of governance in achieving development goals, my Government approved a national programme on good governance for human security to facilitate the policy focus, coherence and sustainability of its programme of action. Mongolia has thus become the first country aspiring to ensure human security through building good governance. As we move along this trailblazing path, we are aware of the need for the knowledge, expertise, experience and assistance of the organizations of the United Nations system and our fellow members of the international community.

The Government is resolved to ensure sustained economic growth through reinvigorating and encouraging the development of domestic industry, rehabilitating the banking sector, upgrading the living standards of the people, reducing poverty and unemployment, and ensuring equitable social and educational opportunities. We will intensify structural reforms and encourage an export-oriented, private-sector-led economy. Mining, processing of raw materials of animal origin, tourism and other export-oriented sectors are the top priority areas of development. Privatization of State assets, including the most valuable State enterprises, will continue. The creation of a favourable environment for the attraction of foreign investment is also a priority objective.

In its endeavours to carry out simultaneous economic and political reforms Mongolia faces many challenges. On behalf of the Government of Mongolia, I wish to express our sincere gratitude and high appreciation to our bilateral and multilateral partners for their generous support and cooperation pledged at

the eighth meeting of the Mongolia Assistance Group, held last May in Paris, demonstrating thus their support of my Government's policy and action.

Mongolia will continue its active participation in multilateral processes and international organizations such as the United Nations and will spare no effort to ensure that the world Organization remains a focal point for coordination of the effort of the community of nations toward peace and development in the years to come.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Mongolia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Enkhbayar, Prime Minister of Mongolia, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency the Honourable Jakaya Kikwete, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the United Republic of Tanzania.

Mr. Kikwete (United Republic of Tanzania): I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session. Your election is a clear manifestation of the entire membership's confidence in and high regard for your able leadership and diplomatic skills. We wish you success in the tasks ahead. I want to assure you of my delegation's full cooperation and support.

Our salutations are also extended to your predecessor, Mr. Harri Holkeri of Finland, for a job well done.

Allow me also to sincerely congratulate Secretary-General Kofi Annan on the able and distinguished manner in which he has continued to administer and guide the affairs of our Organization. His re-election to a second term attests to the confidence and trust that we have in him. The award of this year's Nobel Peace Prize to him and the United Nations is recognition of his personal attributes and contributions to strengthening the world body. It is also recognition of the glorious performance and achievements of the United Nations in the search of global peace, solidarity and prosperity.

As we applaud and pay tribute to the Secretary-General and the United Nations for their remarkable achievements, the horrific terrorist attacks of 11 September against the United States are a clear reminder to us all that the fight for lasting world peace is far from being won. Strangely enough, the fight can take new dangerous dimensions when aeroplanes, which are a magnificent human invention for the fast movement of people, goods and services between distant places, can themselves become weapons in terror attacks.

Coming from a country that fell victim to a terrorist attack with the bombing of the United States Embassy in Dar es Salaam in 1998, I can clearly understand the pain, anger and quest for revenge on the part of President George Bush, his Administration and the people of the United States of America. On that fateful day, when 11 of our fellow citizen's perished and over 70 people were wounded, the Government and people of my country felt exactly the same. We therefore perceive and share the pain and grief of the people of the United States and support their right and that of their Government to seek redresses and fight the perpetrators of this heinous crime.

Terrorism is a horrendous crime in its brutality and victimization. It is wanton, cruel and indiscriminate. The world must work together to fight and defeat it. Allow me to reiterate Tanzania's pledges, resolve and readiness to continue to participate fully in the efforts to combat terrorism.

The events of 11 September remind us once more of the need to expedite the process establishing the International Criminal Court.

Allow me also to convey sincere sympathy to the families of the deceased in yesterday's tragic plane crash. Our thoughts and prayers are with them in this time of grief.

This is the first session of the General Assembly after the Millennium Summit held here last year. At that Summit, the world leaders defined the agenda and strategies of our Organization in the new century. There was common understanding in the new century, a resolve to continue to work together to tackle the numerous problems bequeathed by the last century. It is the view of my delegation that this session of the General Assembly and the subsequent ones should translate that commitment into concrete actions.

Permit me at this juncture to share with the Assembly some thoughts about what could be the important priorities of the United Nations. Tanzania

would like to see a United Nations that continues to be the guarantor of world peace and security, a United Nations that has the development agenda at the centre of its main objectives and activities and a United Nations that continues to fight for justice and equality among peoples and nations the world over.

Strengthening and revitalizing the United Nations is an imperative we all agreed to undertake almost a decade ago. We have done a remarkable job as regards the restructuring of the Secretariat and the United Nations agencies. It is regrettable that reform and restructuring of the Security Council remain elusive. A process started seven years ago has yet to bear the desired result. The disturbing thing is the fact that in some quarters it no longer appears to be a priority subject.

Tanzania believes that expansion of Security Council membership in both categories is as relevant and desirable today as it was seven years ago. We would like to reaffirm our support for the principle of equitable representation of Member States on the basis of their geographical regions. In particular, we want to reiterate support for Africa's request for two seats in the permanent category. As the continent with the largest portion of the membership of our Organization, such a representation is well deserved. We also think that the time has come to have a serious look at the circumstances and modalities for invoking the use of veto powers. We are of the view that the veto power should be used in pursuit of global interests, and not narrow national interests.

At the Millennium Summit, world leaders emphasized that the development agenda should continue to be at the centre of the objectives and activities of the United Nations. We know that the United Nations is not a major funding institution, but over the years it has been the moral force behind the many difficult decisions taken to address serious economic issues. The United Nations organized several forums where various development agenda items were discussed and continue to be discussed, and decisions taken. We want the United Nations to continue to do that.

In a period of global economic slow-down like the one we are witnessing today, the task of forging new strategies to tackle the intractable problems of poverty, hunger, disease, deprivation and environmental degradation becomes very challenging indeed. We hope the current economic crisis will not last long, because if it does its consequences may be bad for us all, especially the developing countries. I would also add that Africa, as a continent with 34 of the 48 least developed countries, will suffer the most.

In view of this situation, this world body, donor countries and least developed countries must muster collective efforts to ensure that these problems and many more are addressed collectively. I know that there can never be quick fixes to resolving such problems. However, building those kinds of partnerships is one thing that the United Nations should help realize.

There is no doubt that for development to make sense in the context of the developing countries like Tanzania, the availability of official development assistance (ODA), plus long-term capital flows and access to technology and markets of the developed countries, are essential. These will have a catalytic role in building domestic supply capacity.

We are particularly concerned that the situation with regard to availability of ODA is still not encouraging. Most developed countries are far from meeting the target of contributing 0.7 per cent of their gross domestic product to ODA, as agreed way back in 1970 and reiterated at the 1992 Rio Summit. What is more disturbing to us is the fact that the decline continues unabated despite numerous appeals. My delegation would once again like to use this opportunity to call upon the developed countries to honour this historic duty to mankind. We hope the United Nations will remain seized of the matter and exercise leadership.

The flow of foreign direct investment (FDI), which is so essential for inducing growth in our nations, leaves much to be desired. So far, the flow of FDI is not as we would have wanted or have expected it to be.

The painful part of this problem is the fact that many of our countries have done everything that has been demanded of us in order to create a conducive environment for FDI to flow, yet there is not much of it coming. Take the example of my country, where we have established, through an Act of Parliament, a financial, legal and institutional framework as attractive and competitive as one would find anywhere in the world. We have a sound macroeconomic environment; there is political stability; and good

governance and democracy are vibrant, yet foreign direct investment flows are minimal.

My country's experience is the experience of many countries in the developing world. We are at a loss as to what else we have to do. Maybe someone will volunteer to tell us. While we continue to appeal to the developed countries to do more, we request the indulgence of the United Nations. In this regard, we welcome and support the convening of the International Conference on Financing for Development, to be held next March. We hope that the question of ODA and FDI will be given appropriate consideration. I promise Tanzania's full participation in that Conference.

Easy access by the developing countries to the technology and markets of the developed world could contribute immensely towards the alleviation and eventual eradication of poverty in the world. There are encouraging developments in the area of market access, with initiatives such as the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), which allows over 1,800 products from countries of sub-Saharan Africa to enter the United States market duty-free and quota-free, and the Cotonou Agreement, which allows everything but arms from the countries of Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific to enter the European Union duty-free and quota-free.

We hope the initiatives taken by Japan under the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) and by the People's Republic of China under the China-Africa Cooperation Forum will go a little further and offer opportunities similar to those offered under AGOA and the Cotonou Agreement. It is our sincere hope and expectation that the four aforementioned initiatives by the United States, the European Union, China and Japan will also ease the difficulties experienced by our countries in accessing the financial, scientific and technological resources available in those nations. While our nations will continue to engage the developed countries bilaterally or collectively in various forums, the United Nations should never lose sight of the need to help us.

The problem of the external debt of developing countries, and particularly of the least developed countries, continues to pose a serious challenge to the development efforts of those countries. External debt servicing has been crowding out priority social investments in our respective countries. In Tanzania, for example, debt servicing averaged one-third of the entire Government's budget. With another one-third spent on payment of salaries, the Government is left with only a third of the budget to perform its duties, which range from maintaining law and order to the provision of basic social and economic services. This clearly underscores the fact that debt relief and debt forgiveness for nations like mine will go a long way towards enhancing Government capacity to discharge its duties.

In this regard, Tanzania welcomes the various measures undertaken by the international community aimed at dealing with this chronic debt problem. Our only concern is that, despite all these measures, the scope and magnitude of debt is continuing to build up to dangerous proportions. More surgical measures should therefore be taken to deal more effectively with this crippling problem.

Let me now turn to issues related to peace and security. At the outset, let me state that it is heartwarming to see the Security Council more engaged in the process of trying to tackle the crisis in the Great Lakes region. The Government of Tanzania is committed to building a secure and stable Great Lakes region. In this regard, I want to assure the United Nations that we will continue to play a positive role, as we have been doing, in order to help the people of Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo secure and enjoy the peace which they so richly deserve.

It is encouraging to note that in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, despite difficulties, the implementation of the Lusaka Agreement is on track. We are particularly glad that the inter-Congolese dialogue is under way. I would like to use this opportunity to appeal to the parties to the conflict to stay the course. We also appeal to the Security Council to remain seized of the matter, and to the international community to extend the urgently needed financial resources to the facilitation of the dialogue.

We welcome the installation of the Transitional Government in Burundi. We hope that this historic event, which marks the successful conclusion of long and arduous political negotiations, is also the beginning of an irreversible process that will put an end to the long years of pain and suffering endured by the people of Burundi. Indeed, the subregion continues to work towards the cessation of hostilities and towards

ultimately securing a ceasefire agreement between the rebels and the Government. In this respect, I would like to take this opportunity to say three things.

First, let me reiterate Tanzania's previous calls for the leaders of the Front for the Defence of Democracy (FDD) and the National Liberation Forces (FNL) to see reason and to join the Arusha process. I believe that there is nothing they are fighting for which has not been discussed and decided upon in the Arusha Agreement. Even if they feel strongly that something has been excluded, the Arusha Agreement provides opportunities for discussion of the same by the parties.

Secondly, Tanzania promises its readiness to work with the new Government and to do all it can to help it succeed. We are ready to work with the new Administration in Bujumbura and with the Front for Democracy in Burundi (FRODEBU) to engage the rebels and encourage them to join the Arusha Agreement.

The third issue I would like to address relates to the repatriation of Burundi refugees living in Tanzania. It need not be emphasized that the return of refugees to their homeland is a crucial element in the healing and normalization process in that troubled country. As host to over 800,000 refugees from Burundi, Tanzania expects repatriation of these refugees to be among the top priority issues in the implementation of the Arusha Agreement. It is our sincere hope that, in that exercise, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) will include not only the half a million people in the camps that they manage in Kigoma and Ngara, but also the earlier caseloads of about 300,000 they left to Tanzania to manage.

It is sad that Savimbi and his renegade UNITA continue to be a menace in Angola. The United Nations and the international community should do more to stop this menace. If action could be taken in Kosovo and Sierra Leone against criminal leaders, why not do the same against Savimbi and UNITA? I believe it can be done. Let us muster the political courage.

With regard to Western Sahara, Tanzania reiterates its long-held position that this is a question of decolonization and that the Sahrawi people have a right to decide on their future through a referendum, as stipulated in the relevant Security Council resolutions. We fear that abandoning that path could lead to untoward events.

It is regrettable that the situation in the Middle East remains volatile and explosive. It is our hope that the peace negotiations between Palestine and Israel will be revived through a resolute commitment by all parties. The United Nations has a major role in ensuring that the peace process gets back on track. The commitment made by President Bush on the creation of the state of Palestine on the basis of Security Council resolutions is very reassuring. We hope this will be followed through and that the United States Government will once again assume its leadership role.

As host country to the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, we cannot but reiterate our call for continued support for the Tribunal. It is gratifying that the Tribunal's mission of bringing to justice those responsible for the genocide in Rwanda is well under way. Contrary to previous negative publicity, the Tribunal is increasingly obtaining the appreciation and credit it deserves for its work.

I would be remiss if I were to conclude my remarks without saying a word about the debilitating disease of HIV/AIDS. The impact of this worldwide scourge is not only a major scientific and medical challenge, but a threat to the very existence of humanity. Our leaders at the June special session dedicated to HIV/AIDS pronounced themselves on this scourge and on their resolve to fight it. Let me express our appreciation for the leadership role of the United Nations, particularly the Secretary-General's commitment to combat this global crisis, from which no corner of this world is safe.

I believe that, with resolute political will, the war against this world pandemic is not insurmountable.

The President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, His Excellency Mr. Jozias van Aartsen.

Mr. Van Aartsen (Netherlands): How can anyone stand on the smoking ashes of "ground zero" and not be overwhelmed by disbelief, anger, and frustration? How can anyone escape the enormity of what happened in September or not feel compassion for all those who have lost someone dear to them? At "ground zero" we not only witness death and destruction, but we also see how American values have come under siege. These are shared values. That is why the people I represent now stand squarely behind the United States.

No matter how deeply moved we may be, we must look beyond our anger and frustration. Through our tears, we should discover opportunity. Through our bitterness, necessity. We must turn compassion into solidarity, turn solidarity into common action. We need a plan — in sum, we must turn to the United Nations.

The reaction on the part of the United Nations from the beginning of this crisis has been prompt and responsible. As we meet this week, we must try and keep the momentum going. And that is precisely what we are doing. There is something I have sensed in the first few days of this general debate — namely, determination — determination to use the United Nations to the fullest, on many different fronts, as a centre of gravity for our common actions — common action for confronting a global threat — common action to maintain the international order.

With regard to that common action, what have we learned so far? Three lessons. Lesson number one: the law must be firmly in place. There is a wealth of legal rules to guide us in these difficult times, and more of them are on the way. A striking example of innovative rule-making was presented by the Security Council. Binding under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter, resolution 1373 (2001) takes action not in regard to a specific threat or breach of the peace, not against a particular Member State, but takes action to confront a phenomenon, a threat to our human values and economic interests — action against unidentified enemies. By writing new law, the Council has broken new ground. Even more so, as it has set up the Counter-Terrorism Committee to monitor the implementation of its decision.

Jointly with our partners in the European Union, we are taking the implementation of resolution 1373 (2001) very seriously. One aspect of it is especially important to us: promoting ratification of all of the various anti-terrorism conventions and monitoring compliance. My country has some expertise to offer and will gladly share it. Meanwhile, an overarching convention against terrorism is in the works. That is good. But we are getting bogged down over a definition of terrorism. That is bad. Let us not forget that it took us 20 years to produce a fairly useless definition of aggression. The world cannot wait that long. Besides, when terrorism stares you in the face, you'll know it.

In addition to rule-making, the real challenge lies in implementation. There, we should try harder. Let me give you one example. Just before the summer we lost our momentum in the fight against biological warfare, and therefore the fight against bio-terrorism as well. The world is a scary place. Anthrax is only one motive for retrieving that momentum. Let us resume our efforts to turn the Biological Weapons Convention into an instrument that can really make a difference.

The need for stepping up security is immediate, comprehensive and self-evident. In the aftermath of 11 September, nobody would deny it. But we need to be concerned with the downside of security as well. Parts of our value system may come under pressure when Governments seek to bolster public safety, and by this I mean human rights and fundamental freedoms. As private citizens we must be ready to make concessions and, yes, we will be forced to relinquish some freedom from intrusion in our private lives. But we cannot be expected to live in a never-ending state of siege. Wherever we have to strike a balance, we have to do so wisely. Long ago, we drew a line beyond which we cannot step — we cannot detract from the basic principles of human rights. Those principles are the true measure of our evolution and our civilization. If we look the other way, we lose the moral high ground. If we compromise, we lose out to those who besiege us.

What is being put to the test here is our own value system. The core notion of that system is tolerance. Tolerance must, however, come from all sides. Tolerance is not the equivalent of giving in to intolerance. It does not imply that you bend at the slightest pressure. Tolerance means that you stand up to be counted, that you draw a line in the sand when your basic values are challenged. That is lesson number one.

Lesson number two: there are "black holes" in the international order: failing States. We knew they were there all along, but we have never been quite sure how to deal with them. Why should we care about failing States? For several reasons. Look at the avalanche of drugs, drug-money, weapons, and warlords spilling out of Afghanistan. Look at the blood diamonds streaming out of Africa. Think of how failing States attract parasites and how they turn into breeding grounds for terrorism, a haven for international crime. Think of peace and security, too; of how faltering countries become a liability to their own people; of how they flaunt the rules of the game and become a liability to the whole neighbourhood.

How do we deal with failing States? That question has never been answered in a systematic manner. Any answer begins by recognition on the part of the Member States of this Organization that failing States are a problem. Indeed, it may turn out to be the most pernicious problem of the new century. From that point on, we need to build a strategy, and do so together, within the framework of this Organization.

What are we aiming at? How ambitious are we? Can we get in early to prevent failing States from failing? Are there any early warning signals to look out for? If we see those signals, do we have the means to act? And the political will? Once States are failing, do we try and fix them? Do we settle for ending the fighting, wherever fighting is going on? Or do we limit ourselves to humanitarian aid? These are all difficult questions.

My belief is that outside intervention only goes so far. I do not believe that massive injections of aid are the right answer to failing States. For one thing, donors are reluctant to poor money down a black hole. But more importantly: the solution should not come from the outside, but rather from the inside. Even in the poorest country we will find well-educated citizens just as committed to building better lives for their children as in the rest of the world. They need a helping hand in building good governance and a viable civil society. Yet, ownership is paramount. Failing States, too, have the capacity to fix themselves. Indeed, only if they fix themselves will they no longer fail. Our role should be to help galvanize and to enable those capacities.

Lesson number three: the United Nations should be doing the right things. As of today the Northern Alliance has entered the city of Kabul. That fact makes it even more imperative that we speak about Afghanistan in the United Nations.

Consensus is growing that in post-Taliban Afghanistan, the United Nations should play a central role. I certainly support that view. But a central role in what? For make no mistake: once the bombing stops, the difficulties are still overwhelming. The country is not only rugged and ruined, but also the size of Central Europe and packed with landmines. Factional fighting is bound to continue. The United Nations can do a lot, but we need to beware of sending the United Nations on an impossible mission. Instead of calling on the United Nations for functions where it is weak, let us call on the United Nations for functions where it is strong.

For example, take governance, a major worry to us all. Much as we seek to avoid it, a political vacuum is a realistic prospect, given that tribal conflict in Afghanistan is as old as the country's history. Afghans are a proud people. Hostility towards outside intervention is strong. The country needs to be governed from within. We may be looking both for a broad-based interim Government and for a stable permanent structure. Without rushing to elections, we need to be satisfied that such a political settlement is supported by the population. In the process, the United Nations might play a central role as a catalyst and as an adviser, but not as a governor. Afghanistan is not East Timor. It is important, too, that any settlement be supported by the neighbouring States and by a Security Council resolution.

As regards security: in the absence of a functional national army, transitional military arrangements are essential. They are essential to create a secure environment enabling reconstruction to begin and refugees to return home. Choosing the right format is critical. A conventional United Nations peacekeeping operation may not be a good idea — certainly not for the country as a whole. Supplying peacekeepers is still voluntary. Realistically, the troop levels needed for a country this size would almost certainly not be attained. Bosnia has taught us the hard lesson of the price we pay when we send in a United Nations force that is below par. We should be careful to avoid another Somalia. Different formats for security arrangements are possible, and we should reflect on them as a whole. In a previous context, Ambassador Brahimi has offered us a wide spectrum of lessons learned about United Nations peacekeeping. We should take them to heart. Now, as the Special Representative, he deserves all the support he needs from us.

Concerning mine clearance: Afghanistan has more landmines than any other country in the world. The country cannot possibly get back on its feet as long as those mines are there. We have to get rid of them, and the United Nations can help us to do that. We must pay the bills.

As to reconstruction: we should capitalize on where the United Nations is uniquely positioned either to deploy operations in the field or to coordinate those of others. Let us not limit our view to the part of the

United Nations here in New York, but rather broaden it to the entire United Nations system, including the Dumbarton Oaks and Bretton Woods institutions. We need to bring the full weight of that system to bear on the future of Afghanistan. I am speaking of the World Health Organization and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the United Nations Drug Control Programme, of the International Labour Organization and the World Food Programme, of the United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank. There is no need to set up a whole new mechanism. The Afghanistan Support Group is fully entrenched, and we should use it.

Especially now, caught in the crossfire, the Afghan people are not to be envied. Their plight will not be over once the guns are silent. Food stocks, health care, housing, utilities, schooling, agriculture — the list of concerns is a long one. But all of us need to push that agenda. We may not be part of the problem of Afghanistan, but we must be part of the solution.

Yet again, reconstruction cannot be imposed upon a nation. Here, too, a sustainable recovery needs to come from within. All the men, and especially the women of Afghanistan, must once again become the makers of their own fate and future. The answer lies with them.

The United Nations is not merely "an ineffective acronym", as a misguided message on the Internet would have you believe. For global issues, multilateral cooperation is the only answer. Multilateralism is solidarity worked into a plan. As I said, the reaction by the United Nations system in the aftermath of 11 September has been prompt and responsible. In order to maintain that level of performance, we, the Member States, will have to show the stamina, support and commitment to make it happen. Our track record is not impeccable. The United Nations can go no faster than we will let it, which means we have to make it work. This also means we have to provide it with all the resources, and the political will, to give it the push and punch we need.

The President: I call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Guinea, Her Excellency Ms. Mahawa Bangoura Camara.

Ms. Camara (Guinea) (*spoke in French*): I should like to associate my country and delegation with the expressions of sympathy for the great suffering endured by the city of New York following the crash of the American Airlines plane yesterday. To the Government of the United States, our host city and all the bereaved families, I address the condolences of the Government and people of Guinea.

A year ago in this Hall, the great leaders of the world, in a unanimous surge, committed themselves to thinking together about the role of this Organization, the United Nations, in the twenty-first century, and about ways of achieving its objectives fully, with a view to constructing together a world of peace, progress and solidarity. The historic Declaration which emerged from the Millennium Summit emphasized the need to open a new era of international relations.

It was when the international community was preparing to review the implementation of the recommendations and decisions of that Summit that unprecedented terrorist acts cast a shadow over our hopes. These acts, to which the United States fell victim on 11 September 2001, profoundly shocked the conscience of all peoples. The barbarity and violence of these terrorist attacks, and also the threat of bioterrorism, are serious attacks on international peace and security.

My delegation would like once again to express its sympathy to the American people, especially the families of the many victims. The Republic of Guinea condemns those intolerable acts and believes that it should be the concern of all States to combat and eradicate terrorism. We firmly support any measures aimed at eliminating the bases of international terrorism and fully associate ourselves with the international community in its global response to that scourge.

The fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly is thus taking place within the context of a new and alarming situation for international peace and security. My delegation is therefore very pleased to see you, Sir, presiding over the Assembly during this session. We are convinced that your wealth of experience, as well as your great diplomatic skill, will ensure the success of our discussions. I would like to assure you of the cooperation and support of the delegation of Guinea.

I should also like to thank your predecessor, Mr. Harri Holkeri, for the excellent work accomplished under his presidency.

My delegation would like once again to convey the warm congratulations of General Lansana Conté, President of the Republic of Guinea, to our brother, Kofi Annan, on his well-deserved re-election as the head of our Organization. The unanimous tribute that has been paid to him brings honour to the whole of the African continent and bears witness to his great qualities and his commitment to achieving the objectives of the United Nations. The Nobel Peace Prize recently awarded jointly to him and to the Organization is eloquent testimony to that commitment and an encouragement to continue to act in the service of peace and understanding among peoples.

The award of the 2001 Nobel Peace Prize to the United Nations is, without doubt, a recognition of its role in the implementation of its objectives — the maintenance of international peace and security, development and cooperation among nations. Increasingly, the Organization is proving to be the necessary crucible for dialogue among States. However, almost all Members earnestly desire the strengthening and improvement of the entire system.

While reaffirming its support for the reform process initiated by the Secretary-General, my country, the Republic of Guinea, would like to emphasize the need to strengthen the principal organs of the Organization. We welcome the actions taken by your predecessor, Sir, to streamline the working methods of the General Assembly so as to give it fresh dynamism. We hope that that impetus will continue.

My delegation would also like to reaffirm its support for restructuring the Security Council, in its membership as well as its working methods, so as to enable it to better protect the interests of all Member States. I should like to take this opportunity to express, on behalf of my Government, our gratitude to all States for the unanimous support that enabled Guinea to be elected a non-permanent member of the Security Council for 2002 and 2003. During its mandate, the Republic of Guinea will make every effort to contribute actively to the maintenance of peace and security in the world.

Peace and security continue to be threatened in many parts of the world. In the Middle East, intolerance and intransigence have led to a dangerous escalation of violence, which, if not controlled in time, could cause the whole region to go up in flames. The Republic of Guinea would like to appeal to all the parties to exercise greater restraint so as to facilitate a resumption of the peace process. My country supports the full application of the recommendations of the Mitchell commission and the implementation of effective follow-up mechanisms. Dispatching international observers could contribute to ending the violence and returning peace to all the peoples there. However, the indifference of the international community and its failure to take action could, in the long term, prove to be prejudicial to security in the Middle East.

My delegation condemns all acts of violence, which can lead only to a worsening of the situation. In the light of the serious events that have taken place in recent months, the international community must do all that it can to lead all parties to accept a ceasefire and to resume the peace process. Arms must give way to dialogue, which should lead to a just, equitable and lasting peace. The legitimate rights of the Palestinian people should be respected. Likewise, the existence and security of Israel must be guaranteed.

One year ago, my country became the victim of aggression committed by rebel groups. That barbaric aggression caused great loss of life and material damage. My Government would like to express its full appreciation for the subsequent role played by the United Nations in adopting appropriate measures to create conditions conducive to the restoration of peace and stability in the subregion. My delegation would also like to take this opportunity to thank all the individuals and States that contributed to the adoption and implementation of those measures. One year later, the fact that a dialogue has been initiated by civil society in the three countries concerned — Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea — means that we have reached an important stage in the search for peace.

The Republic of Guinea, which has always shown its determination to maintain and strengthen friendship, brotherhood and cooperation with all African countries in general and neighbouring countries in particular, would like to reaffirm to the Assembly its readiness to make the Mano River Union a model of economic integration, social cohesion and political stability.

However, relaunching the activities of the Union will depend upon respect for the relevant provisions of the Non-aggression and Security Cooperation Treaty signed by the three countries and of the 15th Protocol to the Mano River Declaration, signed at Conakry on 8

May 2000. That is what is required for productive dialogue among the three countries.

In the framework of the process of re-establishing confidence and dialogue among the countries members of the Mano River Union, meetings have been held at the ministerial level in Monrovia, Freetown and Conakry. Those meetings made it possible to discuss important problems relating to the activities of armed groups in the subregion, the situation of refugees, measures to rebuild confidence, peace and security, and the need to reactivate the various bodies of the Mano River Union.

My Government welcomes the encouraging developments in Sierra Leone, particularly the programme for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR). The DDR programme that has been implemented will have to be consolidated if it is to lead to the true demobilization of all the Revolutionary United Front combatants and if the mistakes made in Liberia are to be avoided. In Liberia, the restoration of peace after 10 years of civil war has not, unfortunately, been accompanied by a true DDR programme or by post-conflict financial support.

I would like to express regret with regard to the inadequate results of the Paris conference convened to deal with the problem of Sierra Leone, and to call on the international community to provide the necessary material and financial support to guarantee lasting peace in that country. My delegation bases its appeal on the relevant recommendations contained in the Brahimi report, which have been accepted by the principal organs of the Organization. The Republic of Guinea will continue to support the efforts of the United Nations and the Economic Community of West African States in restoring peace, security and national reconciliation in Sierra Leone.

The question of refugees is still a matter of great concern for my Government. The enormous economic, social, environmental and security impact of the continued presence of hundreds of thousands of Sierra Leonean and Liberian refugees continues to impose a heavy burden on the economic and social life of my country. The situation of the refugees is a matter of great concern for the international community at a time when rebel attacks against my country are being carried out, as the countries hosting refugees are the main target of the aggressors. Following this aggression, the Government took appropriate measures, in cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, to relocate refugees in zones far from the borders in order to ensure their security.

The Secretary-General's report on strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance amply describes the context of humanitarian assistance and the difficulties to be overcome, particularly in complex emergency situations.

We welcome the missions undertaken in the subregion of West Africa by various United Nations bodies, as well as the conclusions they reached. While the resolution of most issues identified by those missions requires an integrated approach, it is nonetheless true that problems peculiar to certain countries require particular attention. With respect to Guinea, a victim of the consequences of the conflicts in the subregion, it would be desirable for the international community to provide greater support. In that regard, I wish to reiterate the appeal to convene a conference on solidarity with Guinea in order to help it address the consequences of the prolonged presence of refugees on its territory. I would stress that this appeal of the Guinean Government is supported by the United Nations inter-agency mission that recently visited our country.

Before I conclude on this topic, I wish to welcome the proposal to create a United Nations office for West Africa, in accordance with the recommendation of the Fall mission report. The creation of such a body would demonstrate the Organization's clear interest in making the West African region a zone of peace, security and cooperation. My country will spare no effort in cooperating fully with that office.

How can we discuss the conflicts in Africa without highlighting the links between the illegal exploitation of natural resources, the traffic in weapons and the perpetuation of conflict? The reports of the various groups of experts established by the Security Council are edifying on this subject. In Sierra Leone, Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, these links have clearly shown the involvement, in addition to rebel groups, of certain authorities in that illegal activity.

My Government therefore fully supports the actions of the Security Council to impose sanctions against any Government or group involved in the

pillaging of a country's natural resources, in accordance with the relevant provisions of international law. The Republic of Guinea feels that if energetic deterrent measures are not taken against the perpetrators of such crimes, which are emerging as a new kind of threat to peace, the entire African continent may once again fall victim to conflict.

With regard to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, my country calls for scrupulous respect for the Lusaka Agreement and for all pertinent Security Council resolutions, and in particular for the withdrawal of foreign troops, safeguarding the integrity of Congolese territory and the pursuit of the inter-Congolese dialogue.

In the Western Sahara, my country welcomes the efforts of the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General. We are following with great interest the new initiatives under way to find an acceptable solution to the crisis.

The phenomenon of globalization, characteristic of international life today, calls for greater attention from our States. My delegation is aware of the necessary interdependence of nations and wishes once again to stress that there can be no shared destiny without a minimum of justice and solidarity in international relations. We must work together to make international economic relations more human and to eradicate poverty.

There is no need here to point out that poverty, destitution and illiteracy, which are unfortunately the lot of a large majority of nations, provide fertile ground for the propagation of the extremism and fanaticism that, regrettably, underlie terrorist tendencies throughout the world. The eradication of poverty should be the objective of all countries in strengthening the bases of lasting peace and security in the world.

Allow me to reiterate the appeal to the rich countries to listen more closely to the poorer nations and to support them in their development efforts. In this respect, I renew the appeal for the adoption of a better approach to the question of the debt of African countries, for appropriate payment for raw materials and for an increase in official development assistance.

On another level, the Marrakesh Agreement establishing the World Trade Organization (WTO) sought to institute an equitable multilateral trade system with special reference to the particular situation of the least developed countries. It is regrettable to note today, however, that the least developed countries are being increasingly marginalized in the globalization process and that their share of the world trade market is only 0.4 per cent.

The Republic of Guinea hopes that this trend will be reversed and that decisions to that end will be taken at the fourth WTO Ministerial Conference in Doha. These decisions will have to address, inter alia, the issue of the implementation of WTO accords, the consolidation of special and differentiated treatment set forth in the various WTO agreements, consolidated market access for the products of the least developed countries to the markets of the developed countries, and access to essential drugs for the poorest populations of the world that are particularly vulnerable to HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis. I also welcome the People's Republic of China's accession to full membership of the WTO and reiterate the support of the Guinean Government for the position positing a single China.

In addition, we would like to see the International Conference on Financing for Development, to be held in March in Mexico, become an opportunity for all parties to agree on solutions promoting sustainable development for all members of the international community, in particular the developing countries and especially those on the African continent.

In stressing the interdependence of environmental, economic and social factors, my delegation feels that the forthcoming World Summit on Sustainable Development, to be held in South Africa, should encourage the financing of projects. My delegation urges greater involvement by the international financial institutions in the search for ways to promote international cooperation for development. In the framework of operational activities for development, the funds and programmes of the United Nations must more than ever harmonize and stress their interaction on the African continent so as to allow it to rise above conflict and underdevelopment.

I also take this opportunity to appeal to the international community to give special attention to the New African Initiative, adopted at the recent Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity, held in Lusaka in July, in order to help Africa to participate actively in the world economy and international political life and thus to

escape exclusion from a planet undergoing full-scale globalization.

The United Nations was born last century. It continues to exist in this new century. This is a source of satisfaction to humanity. It is therefore essential that we return to the ideals on which the Organization was founded and that we give it the means to achieve a world of peace, progress, solidarity and concord. The achievement of such a world is possible if we want it. Let us work together to make the noble ideals contained in the Millennium Declaration a reality so that we may lay the foundations of a planetary village free of threats to the survival of mankind, such as the scourge of war, poverty, injustice and intolerance. I can solemnly assure the Assembly that my country will cooperate to achieve that end.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Felipe Pérez Roque, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba.

Mr. Pérez Roque (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Before delivering my statement, I would like to express our condolences to the United States, the Dominican Republic and other countries represented here that have lost citizens among the many passengers and crew members who perished in yesterday's tragic crash of American Airlines flight 587, and I hereby extend these condolences to their families.

The war in Afghanistan must be stopped. The Government of the United States must acknowledge that it has made a mistake, and must halt its ineffective, unjustifiable bombing campaign against the Afghan people.

Judging by its results, it would seem that this war has targeted children, the civilian population and the hospitals and facilities of the International Committee of the Red Cross. As to its methods, no honest voice would be raised in this Hall to defend the endless slaughter, with the most sophisticated weaponry, of a dispossessed, starving, helpless people. As to its doubtful purposes, this war will never be justified from the point of view of ethics and international law. Those responsible for it will one day be judged by history.

Cuba has opposed this war from the very beginning as an absurd, inefficient method to eradicate terrorism, and reiterates that it can only bring more hatred and ever-increasing dangers of new actions of this kind. No one has the right to continue murdering children, aggravating the humanitarian crisis and visiting impoverishment and death on millions of refugees.

If the United States obtained a military victory by eliminating all regular and irregular Afghan resistance — something that is not at all easy in practice and extremely costly on a moral level, for it would represent a real genocide without attaining the objective that we must pursue — the world would be farther away than ever from achieving peace, security and the eradication of terrorism.

Cuba's discourse is not founded on ill feelings against the country that has been our most pitiless adversary for over 40 years. It is inspired by a sincere, constructive spirit and a sense of respect for and sympathy towards the people of the United States, which suffered an unjustifiable and atrocious terrorist attack. It is also based on the aspiration for peace and justice for all the peoples of the world.

What Cuba expresses in this Hall, with full openness, may not be to the liking of those who run the United States today, but it will be understood one day by the American people, whose generosity and sense of justice were proved to the Cuban people when it had the support of 80 percent of the public opinion in this country in our struggle to prevent a kidnapped Cuban child from being torn away from his family and subjected to ludicrous political manipulations and cruel psychological tortures.

What Cuba is saying from this rostrum, as we well know, is what many people have been saying in the corridors of this building. What international coalition are we talking about? What is its legitimacy based on if it has started by scandalously disregarding the General Assembly? The United States has not fostered international cooperation. It has rather imposed its war on a unilateral basis and has stated in an unprecedented way that whoever does not second them is for terrorism. How long will the precarious support obtained last, since it is not based on harmonized objectives and voluntary agreement, but on the imposition of will through threats and pressures?

You can be the strongest, but not necessarily right. You can inspire dread, but not sympathy and respect. Only from genuine international cooperation — in which all countries, big and small, participate with a full understanding of everyone's positions, with broadmindedness and tolerance in the

methods used, within the framework of the United Nations and the strict respect for the principles enshrined in its Charter — can a truly effective and lasting alliance emerge to fight terrorism.

The world was surprised to learn of the official announcement of the United States to the Security Council that it reserved the right to decide on an attack against other countries in the future. What is left of the Charter after this? Can this unprecedented threat by any chance be interpreted as an exercise of the right to legitimate defence, enshrined in the Charter as the right of a State to deal with acts of aggression until the Council adopts the necessary measures, and not as a vulgar excuse to unleash attacks against other countries? Is this announcement, or is it not, the proclamation of the right of a super-Power to trample upon the still fragile and incomplete standards that protect the sovereignty, security and rights of peoples?

Cuba calmly and firmly rejects that language. We have not done so out of concern for our own security, because there is no power in the world that can subdue our spirit of independence, freedom and social justice and the courage to defend it at any cost. We did so, because we believe that it is still possible to halt the escalation of a useless, brutal war that threatens to further plunge into hopelessness, insecurity and death the poor peoples of the planet, who are by no means responsible for any act of terrorism, but will be — and already are — the main victims of this senselessness.

Only under the leadership of the United Nations will we be able to defeat terrorism. Cooperation, and not war, is the way. The coordination of actions, and not the imposition of will, is the method. Our objective must be to obliterate terrorism by removing its root causes — and not the hegemonic assertion of the strength of a super-Power, thus turning us into accomplices to its arrogance and arbitrariness.

Therefore, Cuba — which has already responded to the Secretary-General's appeal by deciding to immediately ratify all of the international legal instruments on terrorism — resolutely supports the adoption of a general convention on international terrorism. Of course, this will be possible only in the context of the General Assembly, which — though now completely ignored by those who are promoting the new campaign — has, over the past 10 years, despite the silence and apathy of the Security Council, adopted the principal resolutions and declarations calling for an outright combat against terrorism.

This will allow us finally to define terrorism with accuracy. We have to prevent attempts from being made by a handful of actors with vested interests to try to label as such the right of nations to fight for their self-determination or against foreign aggression. It must be clearly established that the support, abetting, financing or concealment of terrorist actions by a State is also an act of terrorism.

Cuba, which is working on its own anti-terrorism law, which should be in effect shortly, unreservedly endorses the proposal to convene an international conference on terrorism under the auspices of the United Nations. This has been a longtime aspiration of the Non-Aligned Movement and should enable us, as a result of open discussions, collective action and respectful and non-discriminatory agreement — and not of threats, terror or force — to find a way to fully eliminate terrorism and its causes. Here I am speaking of terrorism committed not only against the United States but against any other country — even if emanating from the territory of the United States, or tolerated by, or with the complicity of, its authorities, as has been Cuba's painful experience for over four decades.

Only four days ago, the Pakistani media attributed to a character who is well known and very familiar to the United States a statement supposedly made from Afghan territory saying that he has chemical and nuclear weapons and is threatening to use them against the United States if it uses similar weapons against Afghanistan.

Everybody knows that Afghanistan does not have the slightest ability to produce or launch nuclear or chemical weapons. Only a terrorist organization or leader could come up with the idea of executing an action of this kind using nuclear or chemical weapons. Of course, theoretically this could be possible, as a consequence of the irresponsible behaviour of the major nuclear Powers and as a result of the arms trade, corruption and illegal trafficking in all sorts of military technology. Indeed, several of those Powers have acted as accomplices to, and taken part in, the traffic in fissile material and the transfer of nuclear technology, as suits their interests. However, in reality, given the conditions of war in Afghanistan, it would be ridiculous to resort to those threats. To do so would be

to show tremendous political and military ignorance. If one lacked such means, this would be a dangerous bluff, and if one did have them, it would be absolute madness to threaten to use them.

If the threats contained in the statement published by two Pakistani newspapers are true, they deserve the strongest condemnation, as would the eventual use of such weapons against Afghanistan. That would be a stupid reaction, since, under those circumstances, the only thing that poor, suffering country would have to gain would be a universal condemnation of the use of such weapons. Such threats serve only the interests of the extremist and belligerent forces within the United States, which favour the use of the most sophisticated weapons of mass destruction against the Afghan people. The best weapon for a country that is the victim of aggression is to earn and keep the sympathy of the world, and not to allow anyone to violate the ethical principle that no one has the right to kill children, not even if others are doing it. There is no justice in killing innocent people to avenge the death of other innocents.

Cuba has stated without hesitation that it is opposed to terrorism and to war. Cuba, which is not under obligation to anyone, will continue to be consistent in its positions. Truth and ethical considerations should prevail above all else.

The way events have unfolded, the increased level of hatred and the intensification of passions and potential dangers have shown the absolute truth of the assertion that war has never been, is not, and never will be the way to eradicate terrorism.

The most critical socio-economic crisis ever — the result, halfway through the last decade, of the resounding and irreversible failure of neo-liberalism and neo-liberal globalization — has been dramatically aggravated by this war, which was imposed by one side but whose consequences we all have to bear.

This war must be stopped, not only because its consequences for the Afghan civilian population, but also because of the danger of destabilization in that region. It must be stopped in order not only to save thousands of Americans — mostly young — and thousands of Afghans and other nationals from a senseless death, and not only to preserve international peace and stability, but because this conflict makes it impossible to achieve the objective set by the United Nations 15 years ago: the right to development for all, and an equal opportunity to attain it, and because it renders obsolete the decision made only a year ago to work together in order to eliminate poverty from the face of the Earth.

Will we be willing to organize a coalition against poverty, famine, ignorance, diseases and the scourge of AIDS that is currently decimating the African continent; a coalition for sustainable development, for the preservation of the environment and against the destruction of the planet?

A coalition has been assembled to avenge the grievous and unjustifiable death of over 4,000 innocent people in the United States. Let us come together to seek justice for this great crime — and let us do so without war; let us come together to save from death the hundreds of thousands of poor women who die during childbirth every year; let us come together to save from death the 12 million children who die of preventable diseases before the age of 5 every year in the third world; let us come together to bring medicine for AIDS to the 25 million Africans who today are hopelessly awaiting death; let us come together to invest in development at least a portion of the billions already spent on bombing a country in which almost nothing has been left standing.

Cuba demands that the General Assembly, the Security Council and the United Nations Organization as a whole take up once again, as top priorities, the debate of these problems on which depend the lives of 4.5 billion inhabitants of the third world, whose rights and hopes have also been buried under the rubble of the World Trade Center.

Cuba reiterates its categorical condemnation of the terrorist acts committed last 11 September. Cuba reiterates its condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. Cuba reiterates that it will not allow its territory ever to be used for terrorist acts against the people of the United States or of any other country.

Cuba has the will to do this because it has suffered terrorist acts for over 40 years; because in Cuba there are still the relatives of the nearly 3,500 Cubans killed as a result of acts of aggression and terrorism; and because justice is still demanded by the more than 2,000 Cubans disabled by acts of aggression and terrorism. Some of Cuba's sons and daughters who fought against terrorism have become the victims of

cruel persecutions, merciless treatment and unjust and slanderous trials.

The people of the United States are victims not only of terrorism and panic but also of the lack of truthful information, manipulation and the questionable curbing of their freedoms. Cuba does not nurture any hatred towards the American people, whom we do not hold responsible for our suffering caused by terrorism, acts of aggression and the unfair economic war that we have had to withstand during almost an entire lifetime. We share with the American people the aspiration of one day having relations based on respect and cooperation.

If anyone here takes offence at these words uttered on behalf of a small, generous and courageous people, I apologize. We speak in a straightforward manner. Words exist to uphold the truth, not to conceal it. We rebel against injustice and oppression. We have the moral resolution. We defend our ideals with our lives. Our support can be won for any just cause, but we will not be overcome by force, or allow absurd slogans or shameful campaigns to be forced upon us.

For many years now, we have proclaimed that for us Cubans, the historical dilemma is: "Motherland or Death!" From this comes our confidence and sureness that we are and will continue to be a worthy, sovereign and just people.

The President: Before giving the floor to the next speaker, I would like to urge once again that speakers cooperate in limiting their statements to 15 minutes each so that the projected schedules of the General Assembly can proceed without much delay.

I now give the floor to The Honourable Lakshman Kadirgamar, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sri Lanka.

Mr. Kadirgamar (Sri Lanka): Every speaker from this podium during the special debate on terrorism, the debate on dialogue among civilizations and our current general debate has said, suggested or implied that 11 September has changed the world irrevocably. Indeed it has. A democracy is an open society. Movement is free. Speech is free. All the citizens of a democratic society are free to lead their lives in freedom, subject only to the rule of law. Fear and the spirit of democratic freedom are two totally opposite states of mind. Yet, today, fear stalks the United States of America, where democracy has flourished vigorously for so long, bringing prosperity to its people and taking human achievement to unimagined heights of excellence.

There can be no argument that terror in all its manifestations must be fought relentlessly and globally. Gone are the days when a country affected by terror, as my country has been for two decades, can be told by the international community, "We are sorry about what is happening in your land, but there is nothing we can do to help you because we have no laws to combat terror." When our Central Bank was bombed and destroyed, when the Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic, one of the holiest shrines of Buddhism, was bombed and saved from destruction only by a miracle, when a commuter train carrying workers home was attacked with explosives, when thousands of people, including monks, women and children were slaughtered, when Muslims were massacred in a mosque while at prayer, when a President of Sri Lanka, Ministers and Members of Parliament and many other elected leaders were assassinated, let alone a Prime Minister of India, when a suicide bomber at an election rally attacked the incumbent President of Sri Lanka, killing and wounding scores of innocent bystanders and grievously wounding her in the right eye, the sight of which was lost — all this and much more has happened at the hands of a terrorist group in Sri Lanka — we received merely sympathies, condolences, expressions of shock and outrage, while the funding that fuels the terrorism in my country went on apace in the great, liberal democracies of the West. When half of the aircraft in our national airline were damaged or destroyed by those same terrorists on 24 July, we were advised by some Governments to negotiate. We were reminded that "violence begets violence".

That approach has changed dramatically in recent days, or so it seems, because terrorism has assailed the national interests of many countries. Terrorism is no longer the curse of the poor. Now, more than ever before, when a terrorist attack takes place somewhere in the world, "never send to know for whom the bell tolls", as John Donne said nearly four centuries ago, for surely "it tolls for thee".

The United Nations has focused sharply on building consensus to fight terror. Two important United Nations conventions were adopted with admirable speed — the International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings and the International Convention for the Suppression of the

Financing of Terrorism. Another important convention is being considered at this session by the Ad Hoc Committee on International Terrorism, which is chaired by Sri Lanka. Since we have been so severely affected by terrorism, it is only natural that we should play a leading role in designing the legislation that the international community should adopt and implement to combat terrorism.

There is a particularly abhorrent brand of terrorism that the world can never condone — that is, the forcible conscription of young children for battle, widely practiced by the terrorists of Sri Lanka and well documented by Amnesty International, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. It would be a permanent blot on humankind's conscience if these poor children were to be consigned, unnoticed and uncared for, to their miserable fate.

While terrorism must continue to be fought, relentlessly and by everyone everywhere, sooner rather than later the international community will have to focus its collective attention on the question of analysing and diagnosing the causes of terrorism, preventing and finally eliminating it before it becomes a problem of such deadly dimensions that it threatens the whole world. The causes of terrorism cannot be ignored. To examine the roots of terrorism and the culture in which it breeds in a systematic, objective, well-informed manner is not, by any means, to yield to terrorism. It is not a manifestation of weakness for the international community to examine the root causes of terrorism. It is axiomatic that a contented people do not rise up to destroy the society in which they live. If the world has become a village, surely we must take care to ensure that the villagers living down one road in the village are not given cause to become resentful and angry at the opulence enjoyed by other villagers living down another road, only a stone's throw away.

Might I suggest, therefore, that this General Assembly consider the convening of an international group of eminent persons with the appropriate backgrounds in all relevant fields, representative of all regions of the world, appointed by the President of the General Assembly, the President of the Security Council and the Secretary-General, with the request that the group report to the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Secretary-General within an appropriate time frame on terrorism and its prevention.

Thus, inescapably we will have to revisit and re-address the old questions that have haunted the United Nations ever since it was born — that is, the questions of poverty, hunger, disease, ignorance and injustice. These questions have been with us for a long time. They have received answers which are, to a large extent, no more than faint-hearted attempts to forge solutions that look grand on paper but are incapable of implementation due to the lack of funds and the lack of political will.

The formulation of policy has always been far easier than its implementation and, when we look to the future through the ultimate prism — namely, the funding available — we face once more the bitter truth of which our colleagues from the developed world have been warning us year after year: "the funding globally available is far from promising".

We in the developing world have also been warning our colleagues for so long, when a developing country is unable to generate a sufficient amount of domestic capital, public or private, it is to international capital that we, in the developing world, have to turn; and, as international private capital is sensitive to the rate and continuance of profitable return, it is only official development assistance (ODA) that remains.

On 8 November, only a few days ago, at the European Union's (EU) Development Council in Brussels, a common statement was delivered by the five Ministers for Development Cooperation of Denmark, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway and Sweden. Their words convey far more effectively, and with far greater authority, than my words could possibly do, the thoughts of developing countries on the question of development aid, and, therefore, I take the liberty of quoting that common statement in its entirety:

> "In the Millennium Declaration, the international community recognized the fight against poverty as the greatest challenge to our global governance system".
>
> "The events of 11 September have made it even more crucial to deal with these problems. We not only need a global coalition against terrorism. We need a global coalition against poverty as well.
>
> "The Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan, at the Conference on

the Least Developed Countries in May 2001, remarked that only a few countries have lived up to the goals of devoting 0.7 percent of their gross national product (GNP) to official development assistance (ODA), and that the least developed countries suffer disproportionately as a result of that.

"We need better and more effective development assistance: policy coherence, lower transaction costs by harmonization of procedures. We need sharper focus on the importance of strong institutions and sound economic and social policy. But we cannot expect to reach our common goal of halving extreme poverty by 2015 without increasing aid volume."

I continue to quote from the common statement:

"There is no need for a new set of standards. All United Nations members, with the exception of the United States, have accepted a long established standard volume of ODA for donor countries: 0.7 percent of GNP. But the international community is still a long way from making this standard a reality.

"Although the EU has stressed the importance of the 0.7 percent target in the conclusions of the European Council in Göteborg, the EU's record is no exception: in 2000, member States gave an average of only 0.33 per cent of GNP in ODA. This is better than the OECD average of 0.24 per cent, but it is still a long way from the target."

"In fact, the Netherlands, Sweden, Denmark and Luxembourg are the only EU member States that meet the ODA standard. Norway, a non-EU member, is also part of this exclusive club. Luxembourg, the newest member of this group, has proved that it is possible to raise ODA to 0.7 per cent of GNP in a short period of time. Together we make up the G-0.7.

"The G-7 is full of promises. If all the rich countries would just implement what they have committed themselves to, as the G-0.7 have done, we would not encounter these financial constraints. Having said that, we do realize that ODA is not the only way forward. We also must take into account fair distribution of resources, debt relief, open markets, good governance and the role of the private sector. A reform of the Common Agricultural Policy is a great challenge to the EU.

"We welcome new and innovative financing options, but the main problem is that some countries are not providing adequate ODA resources. Obviously there is a lack of political commitment in setting budget priorities. These countries need to change their political priorities in order to comply with their international commitments.

"EU Declarations like the one made in Göteborg do call for that much needed compliance — that is to say, they call on us to keep the promises we have already made — but they do so only in general terms. We now need to pick up the pace.

"We call on EU members to make a firm commitment at the International Conference on Finance for Development in Monterrey in 2002 and to formulate individual plans and timetables in order to make concrete progress in reaching the goal of 0.7 per cent of GNP to ODA.

"Today's EU Development Council in Brussels is a good opportunity to further strengthen the relations in our global world. It should send a long awaited signal that we are serious about our commitments to developing countries."

I wish to place on record the high appreciation of my Government to the Governments of Denmark, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway and Sweden for those frank and refreshing observations.

We in the developing world will certainly look with much expectation to the International Conference on Financing for Development that will convene in March next year. We cannot but hope that, notwithstanding the continuing difference in positions, a secure foundation for a partnership for the future will be formed there, within which both the strong interests of the developing world and the strong concerns of the developed world can be adequately accommodated.

And I would think that undoubtedly the developed world too will, after the events of 11 September, look to the future with a frame of mind different from its frame of mind before that fateful date. Development, stability and contentment for all

people are no longer charitable objectives. They are in the self-interest of all.

Most certainly, neither we in the developing world nor those in the developed world can allow abject, desperate poverty, without any hope of a better future, to become a fertile field for those who wish to fan the flames of discord and hate and make it their business to wreak death, destruction, terror and mayhem.

Fifty-six years ago almost to this day, the Constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization was proclaimed in words that have a prophetic resonance today:

> "... since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed;
>
> "... ignorance of each other's ways and lives has been a common cause, throughout the history of mankind, of that suspicion and mistrust between the peoples of the world through which their differences have all too often broken into war;
>
> "... the great and terrible war which has now ended was a war made possible by the denial of the democratic principles of the dignity, equality and mutual respect of men, and by the propagation, in their place, through ignorance and prejudice, of the doctrine of the inequality of men and races;
>
> "... a peace based exclusively upon the political and economic arrangements of governments would not be a peace which could secure the unanimous, lasting and sincere support of the peoples of the world, and...the peace must therefore be founded, if it is not to fail, upon the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind."

These are noble words of timeless quality. But words, however noble, which remain untranslated into deeds become shallow, tawdry, degraded.

All nations, all the peoples of the world, must realize that we are slipping into a crisis of a kind we have never encountered before. The spectres of fear, doubt, uncertainty, mistrust and suspicion stalk the world. The hour is late. The hour is grave.

The President: I call on Shaikh Mohammed Bin Mubarak Al-Khalifa, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bahrain.

Shaikh Al-Khalifa (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): This session is taking place amid feelings of sadness and grief that prevail following the terrorist acts of 11 September that befell the United States. They victimized the thousands, from more than 80 countries, who were working in the World Trade Center in the City of New York when the vicious attack took place, and also resulted in great material and economic damage.

My country, the State of Bahrain, moved quickly to condemn the terrorist attacks in New York, just a few kilometres from the Headquarters of the United Nations, and in Washington, D.C. The Emir of Bahrain, Shaikh Hamad Bin Isa Al-Khalifa, expressed to Mr. George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, and to the friendly people of the United States of America the deep condolences of the Emir, the Government and the people of the State of Bahrain for the victims of these wicked attacks, which run counter to the teachings of all divine religions as well as the basic tenets of humanity and the standards of cultural values.

The State of Bahrain has supported the international alliance against terrorism. It has offered its cooperation as a participant in efforts and measures to eliminate terrorism and terrorists as well as their havens and financial resources. We have done so out of our firm and principled position against terrorism and our rejection of all forms of violence and extremism. Such violence and extremism contradict the teachings of true Islam and its tolerant values, as well as all lofty cultural and human values in which we believe and which we support.

The State of Bahrain also followed and participated in the debates on combating terrorism during this session of the General Assembly. It shares the opinion of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, that the shocking events of 11 September have united the world against terrorism, as demonstrated by the condemnation of those horrific attacks expressed by millions of people from all societies. We also share the Secretary-General's opinion that, because of its unique structure, the United Nations has an important role to play in mobilizing the international community in countering and combating terrorism.

As part of its policy of cooperation with international efforts, the State of Bahrain welcomed Security Council resolution 1373 (2001), which dealt

with the issue of terrorism, in particular operative paragraph 6, which requests Member States to report to the Security Council Committee within 90 days on the steps taken to implement the resolution.

While expressing our feelings of sadness at the horror of the events of 11 September, we must also warn against the danger of exploiting the events to link terrorism to Islam. Islam is a religion of amity and tolerance, and we would like to warn against the danger of stirring up hostility against Muslims and of igniting a conflict between religions and civilizations, instead of dialogue and interaction among them for the good of all societies and people of different races and beliefs. In this context, we are pleased to welcome the position taken by the United States of America and other friendly countries in calling on their citizens to refrain from harming their residents or citizens of Arab and Muslim descent and reaffirming the spirit of tolerance, interaction and dialogue among religions and cultures.

The United Nations, which is the ideal tool for confronting international terrorism, faces other challenges that stand in the way of cooperation for prosperity, economic and social development and the building of a world in which justice, peace and equality prevail.

In this regard, this year the United Nations held several special sessions of the General Assembly, one on human settlements and the other on HIV/AIDS, as well as a Conference on small arms. The Economic and Social Council also convened conferences on information technology, the eradication of poverty and financing for development, as well as the World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, which was hosted by the Republic of South Africa.

The State of Bahrain endorsed the United Nations Millennium Declaration, and today — on the basis of its deep-rooted civilization and sustained revival aimed at strengthening the foundations of the modern State, attaining comprehensive development, further invigorating the mechanisms of civil society and public institutions in order to enable its citizens to understand current issues and the need for further advancement — it reaffirms its determination to continue shouldering its national, regional and international responsibilities, with a view to achieving the common purposes and principles set out in the Charter of the United Nations and the Millennium Declaration.

In this context, His Highness Shaikh Hamad Bin Isa Al-Khalifa, Emir of the State of Bahrain, took the initiative to establish a national committee that includes representatives from all sectors of Bahraini society. This committee prepared a draft Charter for national action, which was approved in a free referendum by a majority of 98.4 per cent of the people of Bahrain, and was ratified by His Highness the Emir in February this year. This Charter is part of a comprehensive plan to develop Bahraini society, update its systems and institutions and transform it into a modern State capable of participating effectively in the new world order and of facing the challenges and requirements of the era.

This historic step was coupled with a number of measures to improve and update constitutional and democratic institutions, reaffirm the rule of law, achieve justice, equality and equal opportunities and enhance popular participation. Foremost among these are developments in the field of human rights, which have confirmed the participation of women and enhanced their role in civil society, including their right to vote and to run for elected office, as well as the establishment of the Human Rights Committee of the Shura Council and the establishment of the Supreme Council for Women. The Council's mandate includes, inter alia, proposing public policies in the field of development and enhancing the role of women in civic and constitutional State institutions. Proud of its accomplishments in the political, economic and social fields and reiterating its determination to press ahead with its comprehensive development plans to build a modern State capable of reaffirming its international position and consolidating its relations with various countries of the world, the State of Bahrain would also like to express its thanks and appreciation for the support given by many States of our Organization to the worthy steps taken by His Highness the Emir.

Bahrain's determination to imbue its relations with others with a spirit of friendship and cooperation is evidenced by its fraternal, amicable and close relations with brotherly and friendly States. Such relations are based on mutual respect, non-interference in the internal affairs of others and the promotion of good-neighbourly relations and cooperation among States. In this respect, it is worth noting the position of both the State of Bahrain and the State of Qatar on the

judgement handed down by the International Court of Justice on 16 March this year, which brought to an end the border dispute between the two brotherly countries. The statements issued by the leaders of both countries said that the judgement, which was accepted by the two countries, had opened a new page in relations between them, based as they are on agreement and cooperation aimed at achieving their common interests, and that it represented the triumph of international legitimacy and the principles of international law.

It is regrettable that the ramifications of the dangerous events witnessed in the Gulf region over the past 20 years constitute an ongoing threat to the security and stability of the region and an obstacle to its development and growth. The State of Bahrain, which would like to see regional and international security prevail, especially in the Gulf region, which has strategic importance and in which various countries of the world have vital interests, calls once again upon Iraq to cooperate with the United Nations and to fully implement the relevant Security Council resolutions, in particular those relating to weapons of mass destruction and to the release of Kuwaiti prisoners of war and detainees and those of other nationalities, so that efforts to lift the sanctions and to end the suffering of its brotherly people may succeed.

The State of Bahrain also hopes that, in the light of the positive developments in relations between the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council and the Islamic Republic of Iran, a peaceful solution can be reached in the current dispute between the latter and the United Arab Emirates over the three islands, Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa, all of which belong to the United Arab Emirates. The State of Bahrain approves of and welcomes the direct contacts that have taken place between the two neighbouring countries and hopes that the dispute will be settled by peaceful means in accordance with the principles of international law, including referral to the International Court of Justice.

Since the current Israeli Government came to power, the Middle East has experienced serious developments that have brought back conditions of hostility and confrontation such as engulfed the region prior to the beginning of the Madrid peace process in 1991. This has come about through Israel's aggression against the Palestinian people and its oppression, economic isolation and blockades of all the territory under Palestinian authority.

The peace process based on Security Council resolutions, in particular resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), and on the Madrid terms of reference — specifically the principle of land for peace — is at an impasse. The explosive situation in the Palestinian Authority's territories, with all its inherent risks, including the threat to security and stability in the Middle East and to the interests of the Authority and other States, requires the international community, and primarily the sponsors of the peace process, to shoulder their responsibilities to put the peace process back on track so that its objectives may be achieved.

This can be done only through the full implementation of Security Council resolutions calling for a complete withdrawal from the Arab territories occupied by Israel in the Syrian Golan Heights up to the boundaries of 4 June 1967 and from the remaining occupied territories of the Republic of Lebanon, and through full recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, including its rights of return and to the establishment of its own independent State with Jerusalem as its capital. In this regard, we welcome the statement made by President Bush of the United States of America on the right of the Palestinian people — supported by the European Union, the permanent members of the Security Council and the international community — to establish a Palestinian State.

The role of the United Nations and the reform of its machinery to enable it to face its challenges and overcome them collectively are among the priorities of the Charter that were reinforced by the Millennium Declaration. The Declaration calls on us to uphold the rule of law nationally and internationally, to respect human rights and to conduct international relations in such a way as to preserve world security, peace, development and stability.

In praising the role of the United Nations, I should also like to take this opportunity to convey my warm and sincere congratulations to Mr. Kofi Annan, whom the Member States have unanimously re-elected as Secretary-General for a second term in office in recognition of his tireless efforts to allow the Organization to play its full role and to achieve its objectives. Through those efforts, the Secretary-General and the United Nations under his leadership have fully deserved the Nobel Peace Prize for this year in appreciation of their great contribution to maintaining international peace and security. I

congratulate the Secretary-General and the United Nations on that honour.

I also have the pleasure to extend to you, Sir, and to your friendly country, the Republic of Korea, our congratulations on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session. I express the hope that you will succeed in carrying out your tasks. I also thank your predecessor, Mr. Harri Holkeri of Finland, President of the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session, and commend his invaluable efforts in conducting the proceedings of that session and of the special sessions held in conjunction with it.

We believe firmly that the destiny of the human race is a common destiny, given that we all live in one world. We are therefore duty-bound to preserve that world and to protect it from the threats of war, international terrorism, conflict, disease and poverty. It is incumbent on us, the peoples of the United Nations, as stated in the Charter, to choose to practice tolerance and to live according to the will of Almighty God as peoples that cooperate in the pursuit of friendship, justice, peace and security.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Roberto Rojas López, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Costa Rica.

Mr. Rojas López (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on your well-deserved election to preside over the work of this General Assembly. We are familiar with your valuable personal qualities and appreciate the leadership of your country, the Republic of Korea, in the concert of nations. I would also like to express my gratitude to the outgoing President, Mr. Harri Holkeri, for his excellent work.

I should like to express the deepest condolences of the people and Government of Costa Rica to the Government of the Dominican Republic and to the relatives and friends of the more than 200 Dominican nationals who lost their lives in the tragic aeroplane accident that occurred here yesterday.

This year, the General Assembly is meeting in extraordinary circumstances. Only two moths ago, this city fell victim to the most dreadful and despicable terrorist attack in world history. Even today, just a few kilometres from this Hall, we can contemplate, bewildered, the column of smoke that marks the remains of the twin towers. The rubble reminds us of the destruction pain and death caused by violence and irrational hatred. Therefore, I cannot let pass this opportunity without reiterating the deepest condolences of the people and Government of Costa Rica to the people and Government of the United States.

On 11 September, the terrorists targeted not only New York, but the whole of humankind. Today, we all are victims of terrorism. Costa Rica realizes that terrorism is an extremely grave crime against humanity that victimizes the innocent civil population and endangers the international community as a whole. For this reason, we condemn terrorism categorically in all its forms and manifestations, wherever and by whomever committed, while we proclaim that there is no political, philosophical, racial, ethnic or religious justification that legitimizes the commission of this crime.

The recent terrorist attacks force us to rethink the concept of international security and to renew our commitment to mankind's basic values. When faced with cruel fear and hatred, we must raise the flag of civilization, tolerance and brotherhood. In the face of irrational violence, we must take up the arms of reason, law and order. Against terrorism, we must resort to the rule of law, justice and due process through international cooperation in the judicial and law enforcement fields.

Faced with new treats to international security, the community of nations must create effective and precise mechanisms to ensure peace and development for all peoples. In this context, we welcome the adoption of Security Council resolution 1373 (2001). It constitutes a firm, proportionate and necessary answer to the despicable acts of 11 September.

Furthermore, we welcome the progress achieved in the negotiation of a comprehensive convention to proscribe and punish terrorism in all its forms. My delegation has taken active part in the recent negotiations to solve the outstanding issues, and we are grateful to the Secretary-General for his personal involvement in obtaining a consensus solution. We call upon all delegations to be flexible and to agree to the consensus formula proposed by the coordinator of the contact group on this issue.

The struggle against terrorism must lead us to build a true culture of peace and life. Right now, we have the duty to plant the seeds of peace in order to substitute the vices of destruction and conflict with the

virtues of fraternity, tolerance and cooperation among all men and women.

Currently, thanks to scientific and technological progress, we can defeat disease, poverty, famine, hatred and war. We now posses the necessary economic, technological and philosophical means to guarantee to each and every person the highest standards of life and the necessary conditions for their fullest physical, intellectual and spiritual development.

In this context, the United Nations could and should play a central role in building a future of peace and freedom. This Organization must be a bastion against war, hatred and poverty. This institution must be a beacon that lights the way and points towards the final goal.

To this end, the respect of human rights and promotion of human dignity, in all spheres, must be the crux of the activities of the United Nations. The protection of human beings is the only justification for peacekeeping activities. The promotion of human dignity is the only legitimate reason for pursuing sustainable development. The protection of human life is the only justification for the protection of the environment or search for economic development. The philosophy of this Organization must therefore be deeply humane.

The protection of human rights is the cornerstone of Costa Rica's foreign policy. Costa Ricans loathe every violation of fundamental rights. We reject intolerance, hatred, inequality and war. We condemn extrajudicial executions, the death penalty, abortion, forced displacement, torture, rape and hostage-taking. We categorically condemn all restrictions on freedom of speech and thought. The ethical values of the Costa Rican identity make us proclaim a more just and humane society and demand greater solidarity.

This Organization's work in the area of human rights is outstanding. The codification efforts and the periodic conferences have provided the international community with clear guidelines of conduct. Now, we must concentrate our efforts in the implementation of those norms at all levels of society, placing special emphasis on the fulfilment of economic, social and cultural rights.

In particular, it is necessary to rationalize and coordinate the work of the monitoring organs, including the Commission on Human Rights, in order to make them more effective. Costa Rica considers it necessary to review the national reports system in order to make it more transparent and expeditious. We believe that Member States must open their borders in a candid and forthright manner to the human rights rapporteurs that are appointed by the Commission. This obligation flows directly from the commitments undertaken under Articles 55 and 56 of the Charter. Simultaneously, we must respond positively to the request for additional resources made by the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Moreover, the United Nations must remain vigilant so as to deal with the new challenges that threaten the enjoyment of human rights.

We are concerned by the recent developments in the area of cloning and biotechnology. For this reason, we welcome the proposal by France and Germany to negotiate an international agreement to prohibit the reproductive cloning of human beings. We believe that such an instrument should also forbid other forms of experimentation in biotechnology that are contrary to both human life and dignity.

We must strengthen the family as the basic building block of society. The family is indispensable for the formation of healthy, productive and responsible citizens. We must also make additional efforts to support parents in the education of their children. In this regard, my country recently enacted a special law on responsible parenthood that ensures, through unprecedented and resolute judicial means, that all biological fathers will be responsible for the education and care of any offspring born out of wedlock.

The efforts to maintain international peace and security must also be seen from the point of view of human rights. Armed conflicts produce continuous humanitarian crises and atrocities. As long as war exists, it will be impossible to ensure respect for the basic human rights. In situations of armed conflict, all necessary measures must be taken to protect the security of innocent civilians. It is crucial to provide them with immediate assistance, in order to prevent greater loss of life and destruction. It is also necessary to protect the human rights of refugees and displaced persons. Furthermore, at the end of an armed conflict, greater international cooperation is required to rebuild the national economy and lost infrastructure and to return life to normal.

For several years, my delegation has advocated the strengthening of the Security Council. We have said that it is the only mechanism that humanity has to confront the threats that beset it. Costa Rica has questioned the Council when it has ignored its duties and has been reduced to irrelevance. We have criticized it when it has confined itself to giving weak and inadequate answers to the gravest political and humanitarian emergencies. We have denounced it when it has been unable to act because of an irresponsible use of the veto or the defence of national interests of certain of its members. Today, the adoption of resolution 1373 (2001) gives us new hope. We are confident that, in the future, the Security Council will confront other emergency situations with the same decisiveness, promptness and effectiveness.

Weapons are a catalyst for armed conflicts. Their proliferation fans the flames of violence; exacerbates fighting and hatred; aggravates crime and terrorism; and fosters political and social instability. Military arsenals prolong armed conflicts and impede peace processes, while the armies consume insatiably the meagre national resources. To attain peace, it is necessary to forbid the transfer of arms to rebel, extremist or terrorist groups. The transfer of weapons to Governments that commit systematic human rights violations, do not respect democratic principles or have not ratified the main instruments of international humanitarian law should also be forbidden. We believe that it is essential to regulate the possession of light weapons by civilians.

My country condemns the unilateral and disproportionate use of force and countermeasures, while it supports the mechanisms and principles enshrined in international law. We must embrace negotiation, dialogue, mediation and the judicial resolution of disputes. For this reason, Costa Rica fully endorses and has full confidence in the excellent work of the International Court of Justice. We believe that the voluntary acceptance of its obligatory jurisdiction, through optional declarations, is clear proof of good faith. However, we cannot fail to express our deep concern about the existence and emergence of new reservations on the voluntary acceptance of the Court's jurisdiction. Good faith in international relations demands the withdrawal of those reservations.

True and sustainable peace can be achieved only when decent living conditions are guaranteed to all people; when there is a level of economic development sufficiently advanced so that everyone can satisfy his or her basic needs; when basic human rights are respected; and when social and political differences are resolved through democratic means, dialogue and negotiation. Therefore, it is essential to invest intensively and systematically in our human resources, devoting all necessary resources to education and health. Only an educated population can live in freedom, only a healthy population can work for development and only a cultured population can integrate itself in the globalized contemporary world.

Similarly, it is necessary to ensure the sustainable use and management of natural resources. Without a healthy environment it is impossible to attain decent living conditions, both for the present and for the future. We cannot ignore the damage caused to future generations by the destruction of thousands of square kilometres of the earth's forests.

Costa Rica has developed a national system of payments for environmental services with a view to alleviating the impact of greenhouse gases and preserving our forests for mankind. My country has devoted one quarter of its national territory to the protection of its forests. The production of environmental goods and the provision of environmental services have become an engine of national development. For these reasons, my country will be honoured to be the host country of the first ministerial meeting of the United Nations Forum on Forests, which will be held in March 2002. We look forward to the active and constructive participation of all Member States in that meeting.

My delegation notes with concern the growing inequality in the area of vulnerability. The States with the most fragile economies and whose inhabitants have fewer resources for prevention and reconstruction are the ones that suffer most from the effects of natural disasters. In our region, Central America, we have been the victims of several disasters that, in the course of the past decade, have caused very serious human and material losses. The lack of financial resources imposes a harsh limit on the poorest nations' capacity to prevent humanitarian emergencies. Therefore, we advocate an increase in international cooperation with developing nations to enable them to design and implement programmes to reduce their vulnerability.

In this context, I would like to mention the bilateral assistance that the Republic of China in

Taiwan has given our region to face these emergencies. Costa Rica understands and supports the repeated efforts of the Republic of China in Taiwan, with 23 million inhabitants and a firm process of democratic development and strengthening, to obtain representation within this Organization. That country also constitutes one of the main industrial centres of the Asian basin, with which most Member States have strong commercial and technical exchange ties. We hope that all differences will soon be put aside so that it will be possible to achieve agreements and both branches of the Chinese people will be able to participate jointly in international forums.

Just a couple of months ago we witnessed the bloody and abominable impact of international terrorism. Those despicable acts shook the conscience of humanity as a whole. In these circumstances, the world awaits the guidance of the United Nations. Our peoples demand the decisive and firm action of the international community. Humanity as a whole calls on us to fulfil the lofty goals that we undertook when we established this Organization.

The President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Anna Lindh, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden.

Ms. Lindh (Sweden): Let me start by congratulating the United Nations and its Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, on being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. This is an extremely well-deserved award to a unique Organization and a unique Secretary-General.

Let me also take this opportunity to express my sincere condolences to the families of the victims of yesterday's tragedy near John F. Kennedy Airport.

We are all going through days of sorrow and anger: sorrow for human suffering, for the loss of human lives and for loss of security; anger, because terrorists hit innocent people and because terror is targeted at openness and democracy and threatens our common security and welfare.

Seldom has the international community been challenged as it was through the terrorist acts of 11 September. The United Nations rose to the challenge and took the lead in the struggle against international terrorism. Seldom have we — the peoples of the United Nations — shown such a strong common reaction and unity. Sweden stands wholeheartedly by the United Nations in its call to fight terrorism, and we express our solidarity with the American people and Government at this difficult time.

We have now three immediate tasks. First, all nations have to take action against terrorism, as stated in Security Council resolution 1373 (2001): action against the financing, planning and execution of terrorist acts; and action that makes it clear to those responsible for terror that they will be punished for their acts.

We support the right of the United States Government to self-defence, in accordance with international law. We emphasize the central role of the Security Council.

Secondly, we must assist the people of Afghanistan in their immediate needs. The Afghan people have suffered war, natural disasters and oppression for decades. They are held hostage by an illegitimate regime. Women and children are systematically abused. Women are denied health care and work; girls are practically denied education; and their freedom is heavily restricted. Human rights do not exist under Taliban rule. It is crucial that in all cities now liberated from the Taliban human rights and law and order be guaranteed.

The humanitarian situation facing the people of Afghanistan is acute. The United Nations and all its Member States must increase their efforts to meet the needs of the Afghan population. Closed borders must be opened immediately, both for refugees who seek asylum and for the secure transport of emergency supplies.

Thirdly, we must assist the people of Afghanistan in the reconstruction of their country. The restoration of this ravaged nation to a state of peaceful coexistence must involve a political process leading to a representative government that respects human rights and fosters democratic development. The role, protection and participation of women must be high on every policy agenda.

While addressing these immediate tasks, we must not lose sight of our long-term agenda.

A year ago, here in New York, heads of State and Government from 147 countries adopted the Millennium Declaration. Their message was clear: only by working together can we meet the challenges of globalization.

Today we need to build coalitions and to join forces, not only against international terrorism, but also to fight other global problems. We need to join forces in the fight for global justice. Globalization and openness make people aware of what they have, and of what they lack. People wish to participate. People wish to share the benefits of development. This is positive and represents a challenge to the international community's ability to narrow the gap between rich and poor.

Globalization creates wealth, but that wealth must be more equally distributed. Today, more than one billion people live in absolute poverty. The Millennium Summit pledged to halve poverty by the year 2015. This is a welcome commitment, but it is still not enough. Political efforts should be combined with economic, technical and scientific progress. Development cooperation, trade and agricultural policies must aim at poverty eradication. The instruments are there, and the possibilities today are better than ever before, but we, the Governments, need to show courage and political will. We must provide hope of freedom for the oppressed, education for the illiterate, food for the hungry, health care for the sick and equality for women.

Increased official development assistance is therefore crucial. Sweden is one of the few countries meeting the United Nations target of 0.7 per cent of gross national income in development aid. I urge all developed countries, in particular the big economic Powers, to make real progress towards achieving this goal.

The poorer countries must be integrated into the world economy, and the new United Nations road map is a concrete and welcome step in this direction. The International Conference on Financing for Development, to be held in Mexico, and the World Summit on Sustainable Development, to be held in Johannesburg — in which the Swedish Prime Minister, Mr. Göran Persson, will participate — could be the starting points for new partnership arrangements between Government institutions, civil society and the private sector — a partnership for global justice.

HIV/AIDS is one of the greatest threats to humanity in our time. In some countries, large parts of entire generations fall victim to the disease. Millions of children are orphaned. Economic progress is hampered, and development opportunities are lost. All Member States must show strong political and financial commitment and solidarity. Sweden welcomes the new global fund to fight HIV/AIDS and will contribute $60 million over the next three years to the fund.

A new round of broad negotiations in the World Trade Organization (WTO) can make an important contribution to worldwide growth and development. But the interests and concerns of the developing countries must be properly addressed. Every effort must be made to liberalize trade. The example set by the European Union — to open its market to "everything but arms" — should be followed by others. Developing countries should receive support in building their capacity to fully integrate into the world trading system and the global economy.

The global responsibility in terms of providing more resources and greater market access to developing countries is clear. But the main responsibility for development rests with the Governments and peoples in developing countries. Good governance and sound national policies are prerequisites for sustained development and poverty reduction.

We need to join forces in the struggle for human rights and democracy. When rights are respected, when voices are heard, when society is tolerant, society also becomes safer for all.

Violations of human rights threaten the security and well-being not only of the individual but also of society, and they cause tensions and conflicts. Sustainable development and political stability can be built only on respect for universal and indivisible human rights and on democratic development.

Discrimination in any form is unacceptable and incompatible with these fundamental principles. It is the responsibility of every Government to safeguard equal rights and opportunities for men and women, as well as the rights of the child.

Those guilty of human rights violations and crimes against humanity should never find refuge behind national borders. The transfer of Mr. Milosevic to the International Tribunal demonstrates the resolve of the international community to act against impunity. It carries great symbolic value and will contribute to the process of reconciliation.

The establishment of the International Criminal Court will strengthen our ability to try suspected

violators of international and humanitarian law. It is a matter of the highest priority to have the Court operational promptly, and I urge those States which have not yet done so to ratify the Rome Statute.

Sweden also welcomes the initiative by the Secretary-General to involve global business in promoting human rights through the Global Compact.

We need to join forces to prevent violent conflicts. We need to work against hatred and suspicion between peoples and to stimulate a dialogue between and within cultures. Preventing violent conflict is a primary obligation of Member States under the United Nations Charter, but it took us half a century to start working towards this goal systematically. We now have a better understanding of the complex root causes of conflicts. The responsibility of preventing conflict ultimately rests on every Government. Successful long-term prevention cannot be imposed from the outside, but the local parties should be encouraged and assisted in containing an emerging conflict.

The Secretary-General's report on conflict prevention is a very valuable contribution to the development of a global strategy. I urge all Member States to take an active part in its follow-up.

A core task of the United Nations is to effectively manage conflicts where prevention fails. It is the United Nations that provides the legal foundation for global action. Sweden therefore strongly supports the process that the Brahimi report has set in motion. But we, the Member States, have yet to provide the United Nations with the necessary resources to strengthen its capacities in the area of peace operations.

The Secretary-General's efforts to strengthen the ties between the United Nations and regional organizations in the areas of conflict prevention and peace-building are most welcome.

Cooperation with the United Nations is essential in developing the European Union's conflict-prevention and crisis-management capabilities. In Göteborg last June the Union adopted a framework for increased interaction, so that European Union capacities can provide real added value for the United Nations.

We need to join forces for peace in the Middle East. Our aim must be two States, Israel and Palestine, with secure and recognized borders. The basis is international law and the Security Council resolutions. The situation has deteriorated in the past year, despite strong efforts by the United Nations, the United States, the European Union, Russia and others. A further escalation must be avoided. Israel must withdraw from the occupied territories, cease the settlements policy and put an end to the extrajudicial executions. The Palestinians must do everything in their power to stop the attacks against innocent civilians. Sweden strongly supports the recommendations of the Mitchell report, including a monitoring mechanism, for an end to violence and a revival of the peace process.

We must join forces for multilateral disarmament. A world free from weapons of mass destruction would be a much safer world. Multilateral agreements contribute to security for the individual. They have produced impressive results — chemical and biological weapons have been totally banned. Still, however, many challenges remain.

Three years ago, Sweden helped launch the New Agenda Coalition — a group of States concerned with the lack of progress in nuclear disarmament and sharing a vision of a nuclear-weapon-free world. In our case, the initiative was rooted in the firm belief that both global and national security depend on multilateral frameworks and platforms.

Last year, the 187 States parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) adopted by consensus a road map towards nuclear disarmament. Based on the undertaking by the nuclear-weapon States to fully eliminate their nuclear arsenals, a 12-step action plan was agreed on. This promising outcome was also confirmed by the General Assembly. All States parties have pledged to achieve a nuclear-weapon-free world under strict and effective international control. I strongly urge the four States remaining outside the Treaty to sign and ratify it.

We have a number of important instruments to prevent testing, to ban production of weapons material and to improve verification. The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, a fissile material cut-off treaty and the Additional Protocol to the International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards agreement pave the way for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Now it is now time to concentrate on their implementation.

The United States plans for a strategic missile defence system risk having a negative impact on disarmament, non-proliferation and the whole NPT

process. The ongoing consultations are welcome, but the outcome is still uncertain. We strongly believe that the new threats of proliferation require a multilateral response built on the already existing safety net.

Deep cuts in strategic and tactical nuclear arsenals are long overdue and should be accompanied by effective mechanisms of verification and irreversibility. Such treaty agreements can never be replaced by unilateral declarations.

Weapons of mass destruction remain a threat to mankind. Terrorists must not be given the opportunity to threaten us with these weapons. Now is the time to reinforce efforts to contain proliferation.

The United Nations remains a unique global forum. It is the one organization we can all equally count on and turn to for security and development — as the safeguard of our common future. The United Nations needs to be strengthened, and it needs reform. We need the United Nations, and the United Nations needs us.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Goran Svilanović, the Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs of Yugoslavia.

Mr. Svilanović (Yugoslavia): Let me begin by congratulating Mr. Han Seung-soo on his election as President of the General Assembly. Your sterling credentials, Sir, and vast experience are a firm guarantee that our proceedings will run smoothly and bear fruit.

I would also like to congratulate the United Nations and the Secretary-General on the Nobel Peace Prize. The award is the acknowledgement of the important role our Organization has in protecting world peace and promoting social progress and human rights, as well as an acknowledgement of the successful leadership of the Secretary-General. This honour should be strong encouragement for all of us to put even more effort into achieving the purposes of the United Nations.

Let me also express our deepest sympathies to the families of the victims of yesterday's tragic plane crash.

The terrorist attacks in New York and Washington on 11 September have affected not only the United States but all of us. Once again, we were painfully reminded that only together, with joint efforts, can we stand up to global challenges such as terrorism.

Terrorism is a universal evil, a crime against humanity itself. It equally affects people of every religion, nationality and walk of life. Therefore we did not hesitate to support fully all international actions against terrorism. In that context, it is particularly important to ensure the full implementation of Security Council resolution 1373 (2001) and all international conventions against terrorism. On behalf of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, I have just signed the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism. Yugoslavia has also taken a series of domestic measures to combat terrorism and has coordinated its actions with other States.

Having been confronted with terrorism for quite some time itself, Yugoslavia is well aware of how difficult it is to fight this evil. It is not enough to prevent terrorist attacks and to capture and punish the perpetrators. It is even more important to deal with the social causes of terrorism, in particular, to address issues of poverty and the lack of opportunity. It is also vital to strengthen democracy and respect for human rights everywhere in the world. Poverty breeds anger, and if not channelled into democratic political processes, anger can easily fuel extremism.

In this regard, the experience of Yugoslavia in dealing with terrorism in southern Serbia has shown that it is not sufficient to combat terrorism solely with security forces. We have therefore developed a comprehensive plan which, in addition to security measures, also aims at improving the economic situation in southern Serbia and reintegrating ethnic Albanians into the political process and State structures, especially at the local level. We are implementing this plan in cooperation with a number of international organizations, and this joint effort has proven to be successful. At this very moment, we are successfully training a multi-ethnic police force as an important confidence-building measure.

All this would not be possible without the victory of democratic forces in Yugoslavia last year. This democratic revolution showed the strong will of the Yugoslav people to live in a democratic society based on the rule of law, with full respect for human and minority rights and a sustainable market economy. It also showed their desire to live better lives in a more prosperous society, in peace with their neighbours and

as a part of the European family of nations. In order to achieve these goals, Yugoslavia has started a process of comprehensive political and economic reforms over the last year.

At the same time, we have to deal with several pressing issues which are of crucial importance for the country. Foremost among these issues is the situation in Kosovo and Metohija, southern Serbia and the redefinition of the Yugoslav Federation, as well as cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal established by the Security Council for the war crimes committed in the former Yugoslavia. However, these questions do not concern Yugoslavia alone; they are also of vital political importance for the entire region of South-East Europe. My Government has approached all of them in a constructive way and with a desire to find political solutions through dialogue in a democratic environment.

Today, all countries in South-East Europe have democratically elected Governments, and all are striving to join European and Euro-Atlantic structures. At the same time, our region is still burdened with the legacy of the past 10 years and a number of outstanding issues, the main issue of which is the position of national minorities. The problems of the region are interrelated and must therefore be addressed by broad regional action and with the help of the international community. The solutions to be achieved should enjoy region-wide support.

I believe that the precondition for dealing with the problems in the region is to fully respect the territorial integrity and sovereignty of all countries. It must be clearly said that the era of disintegration in the Balkans has come to an end. This will enable us to address the main problem of South-Eastern Europe — the status of national minorities — with fewer reservations and much more openness. Solving the minority issues, together with more economic cooperation and new confidence-building measures, is the way to achieve lasting stability and prosperity in the region. Such an approach will be fully in concert with the wishes of all countries in the region, including Yugoslavia, to join the European integration processes. In that context, Yugoslavia supports the process of stabilization and association, inaugurated by the European Union at the Zagreb Summit last year, as well as other regional initiatives.

Kosovo and Metohija is the most pressing and immediate preoccupation of my Government. The Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia fully complies with Security Council resolution 1244 (1999). This is also what we rightly expect from others participating in its implementation and, in particular, neighbouring States.

Unfortunately, we are not satisfied with the situation in the field. There is no security for non-Albanians in Kosovo and Metohija; the return of expelled and displaced persons is difficult and slow, and there is no progress with respect to the issue of missing persons. Nonetheless, we signed the Common Document with the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), which should provide for comprehensive cooperation in the implementation of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999). This enabled the President of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Federal and Serbian Republican Governments to call on the Serbs of Kosovo and Metohija to take part in the elections. They did so fully convinced that participation in the elections is in the Serbs' best interest and that cooperation with the international community, particularly with UNMIK and KFOR, is the key to the solution of the situation in Kosovo and Metohija.

The elections to be held in Kosovo and Metohija on 17 November are important indeed; yet, it is only after the elections that I expect we will start even more extensive cooperation. This cooperation should be aimed at implementing Security Council resolution 1244 (1999) fully and at establishing democracy and promoting human rights in Kosovo and Metohija, with full respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. In that connection, my delegation welcomes the presidential statements issued by the Security Council on 5 October and 9 November 2001.

I take this opportunity to affirm the support of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia for the efforts of the United Nations, particularly those of the Secretary-General, aimed at strengthening the role and place of the world Organization in present-day international relations.

Recalling the conclusions of the Millennium Assembly, we expect that the General Assembly, the main organ of the United Nations, will function more effectively. At the same time, the Organization should

be more efficient in order to address the challenges before us. The Security Council should adapt itself to the new relations in the international community.

We attach special significance to the international rule of law. It is of particular importance that all international crimes be punished before national and international courts. In that context, we firmly believe that the International Criminal Court should start its work as soon as possible. This is why my country has already ratified the Statute of Rome that establishes the Court.

In conclusion, I would like to stress that grave challenges are before us. We have to take concerted action to deal with them. We have to be wise in how we act because that will determine the outlook of the international system for many years to come.

The President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan, His Excellency Mr. Rashid Meredov.

Mr. Meredov (Turkmenistan) (*spoke in Russian*): First of all, on behalf of the Turkmenistan delegation, I would like to express my deep condolences to the families and relatives of the victims of the air crash that happened yesterday in New York.

I have the honour, on behalf of Mr. Saparmurat Niyazov, the President of Turkmenistan, to congratulate the United Nations and Secretary-General Kofi Annan on receiving the prestigious Nobel Peace Prize, and I wish the United Nations every success in its effective and highly competent work aimed at solving the thorniest problems affecting today's world.

Mr. President, allow me to congratulate you on your election as President of the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly. We are confident that your experience and knowledge will expedite the work of the General Assembly most effectively.

Turkmenistan is participating in the work of the United Nations General Assembly for the tenth time as an independent entity in international relations and for the sixth time as a State whose status of neutrality has been recognized by the community of nations. Since the adoption of the General Assembly resolution 50/80 on the Permanent Neutrality of Turkmenistan, which is of historic significance for us, our young State has consistently witnessed the support of the United Nations in striving for peace and in our foreign policy initiatives aimed at strengthening peace, security and stability. Taking advantage of this opportunity, I would like to convey to the heads of delegations present here and to the representatives of the member States of the United Nations the words of gratitude from President Niyazov and assure you of Turkmenistan's unswerving commitment to its international obligations as a permanently neutral State.

Relations with the United Nations, based on close cooperation and strict observance of the fundamental principles of the Organization, have been and remain at the fore of Turkmenistan's foreign policy strategy. For us, the United Nations is the main and universal decision-making entity for the most crucial problems of global development. We share the view of the Organization itself that providing it with a new impetus in view of the rapidly changing realities of today's world is of the utmost relevance. In our view the main aspect of this new drive is respect for the overall balance of interests on the basis of the fundamental criteria underpinning the functioning of the Organization, its ideals, the letter and the spirit of the United Nations Charter. It is our firm belief that the United Nations has proven over the years of its existence that it represents the most effective and just mechanism for resolving international issues. It is the mainstay of the whole system of international stability and security.

Turkmenistan has always stood for, and continues to stand for, the strengthening and expansion of the United Nations role in the world. In this connection, we believe that international law and the United Nations Charter, which is based on principles of peace, equality, respect for nations and for their rights and sovereignty and choosing their own way of development, continue to serve as the basis for the world order in this new century. This belief reflects our principles as a neutral State, the entire philosophy of our country's foreign policy and our practice in this decade-long participation in regional and international affairs.

Turkmenistan attaches the utmost importance to its cooperation with the United Nations and its specialized agencies. Our Government and the United Nations Development Programme jointly carry out a number of large-scale projects in the social and economic spheres that have yielded good results for the environment and many other areas, including health, education and ecology. Our cooperation with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United

Nations Population Fund and other agencies has been most effective. Turkmenistan will continue to maintain close ties with these important agencies of the United Nations in the search for new avenues of cooperation.

We consider interaction with United Nations bodies and agencies to be an important and useful instrument in our regional, economic, cultural and informational cooperation, as well as in our joint efforts with the Governments of neighbouring countries to implement other international programmes of various types. All of this undoubtedly fosters neighbourly relations and partnership ties in the region. Therefore, our country intends to focus in the future on maintaining the closest possible contact with the offices of United Nations specialized agencies, whose importance continues to grow.

Along these lines, I should like to draw particular attention to the situation that has emerged in our region since the tragic events of 11 September in the United States. It was with tremendous grief that the people of Turkmenistan heard the news from America. The President of Turkmenistan, on behalf of the people of our country, expressed sincere condolences to the families and relatives of victims, and he addressed words of consolation and compassion to all Americans.

These acts of terror have been unconditionally condemned in our country. The Government of Turkmenistan was one of the first to make a statement in support of international efforts to combat terrorism effectively. Turkmenistan recommended uniting such efforts under the auspices of the United Nations. Action needs to be closely coordinated by the members of the international community on the basis of international law, ensuring that no manifestation of terrorism in this world will go unpunished and making possible effective and legitimate measures to combat this evil.

Given what has happened, our country has cooperated actively with the United Nations in providing transportation through Turkmenistan for humanitarian supplies being sent to Afghanistan by United Nations specialized humanitarian relief agencies, including UNICEF, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the World Food Programme, as well as other governmental and non-governmental organizations. Turkmenistan's constructive position has received general support from the United Nations and the majority of States in the world.

We are greatly concerned over the situation in Afghanistan and the ongoing armed conflict in that country, which affects stability as well as social and economic development in the region. Turkmenistan shares the view that there is no alternative to a peaceful resolution of the Afghanistan question through negotiations. That is why we are convinced that the road to peace in this long-suffering country lies in political negotiations under the auspices of the United Nations. In this respect, we greatly appreciate the efforts of the Secretary-General to enhance the role of the United Nations in finding a solution to the Afghan crisis, because it is precisely the United Nations that must play a role in working out international legal mechanisms to resolve the situation in Afghanistan.

As to the implementation of a strategy for peaceful development and cooperation in the region, I would like to stress that the foreign policy of neutrality pursued by Turkmenistan from the beginning follows precisely this path. This point also touches on the question of exploiting the valuable hydrocarbon deposits of the Caspian Sea Basin, which involves not only regional interests but also the interests of many other nations of the world as well as those of trans-national companies. It is our policy to take those interests into account.

Naturally, the oil and natural gas deposits in the Caspian Sea are extremely important energy resources for the twenty-first century. Their rational and effective exploitation, and the construction of an appropriate pipeline infrastructure to deliver these energy supplies to world markets, will ensure considerable economic growth for many States and the welfare of their people. The United Nations can play an important role in this process, as it is capable of creating a mechanism to guarantee the safe and unimpeded transportation of such raw materials along inter-State pipelines. As the Assembly will recall, Turkmenistan put forward this idea at the Millennium Summit and suggested that an international convention should be worked out in this regard.

Effective economic activity in the Caspian is inherently linked to ensuring stability in the Caspian region. Turkmenistan believes that the Caspian Sea area should be a zone of peace, stability and sustained

international cooperation based on the principles of justice and mutual respect.

It is clear that the problems now faced by Member States of the United Nations are complex and manifold. Their solution is possible not only through collective efforts but also through the necessary recognition of the individual role and responsibility of each nation as a member of the world community. It is this logic of political behaviour that Turkmenistan has in mind when it limits itself to the goals of strengthening peace and promoting economic, social and cultural development. Our country is always ready for constructive partnership, and the United Nations knows that it can always rely on Turkmenistan.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.